

**A CASE STUDY EXPLORING MOTIVATIONAL DETERMINANTS
OF MID-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS**

A Dissertation

by

CYNTHIA LETICIA HERNANDEZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2010

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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ABSTRACT

A Case Study Exploring Motivational Determinants of
Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators. (December 2010)

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Mid-level administrators comprise the largest group of administrative professionals on college campuses today. These professionals affect the daily lives of students and contribute significantly to the overall coordination of institutional resources and activities. Despite the importance of their role in administering programs, services, and other functions central to the mission of the university, little research has been conducted examining the issues that impact their motivation and job performance.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to increase understanding of the factors affecting work motivation of mid-level student affairs administrators through the identification of motivational determinants and an exploration of whether these determinants differed based on the career stage of the mid-level administrator. This study used Vroom's theory of work motivation, specifically valence, instrumentality, and expectancy, to determine the factors motivating mid-level student affairs administrators to perform in their work roles. Ten mid-level student affairs administrators at a large, public, Hispanic-serving institution were interviewed.

Findings suggest that mid-level student affairs administrators are motivated by the opportunity to serve students and influence the development of their subordinate staff. Participants cited internal drives, such as work ethic and a need for achievement, and external factors, such as opportunities to engage in their own professional

development, recognition, and pay, as motivators. Some participants maintained that the culture of the institution had an impact on their motivation to perform. Individually and collectively, these motivational determinants influenced the effort and performance of these mid-level administrators in their work roles. Overall, the participants reported that they enjoyed their work and felt rewarded for their efforts in their work roles. Findings suggest that important differences in motivational determinants as a function of career stage are negligible. Implications and recommendations to implement initiatives to promote and support the identified motivational factors are discussed.

DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad: Thank you for your love, support, and sacrifice
that enabled me to pursue this dream.

To my dear sister, Yvonne, who, like a dragonfly, taught me
to live life to the fullest and without regrets.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Mirroring the development of the nation, American institutions of higher education have grown and changed since their founding over 370 years ago. Beginning with the founding of the American colonial colleges, the evolution of these academic institutions has been shaped by changing educational philosophies, societal values, and student demographics. Institutions of higher education expanded in size and function to meet the multiple missions that they were expected to fulfill. Amid the growth of higher education, the practice of student affairs administration in colleges and universities emerged and evolved. What follows is a brief account of the birth of the student affairs profession in the landscape of higher education.

History of Student Affairs in the United States

Between 1636 and 1789, at least nine colleges were founded in the American colonies. The primary purpose of these early institutions was to sustain the religious culture through preparation of men for the clergy. Institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were “shaped by the Calvinist commitment to a learned clergy and a literate people” (Rudolph, 1977, p. 37).

The students who attended these colonial colleges were limited to the sons of the privileged class who were able to afford tuition. Courses were taught by a small number of faculty and the president served as the sole administrator. In addition to teaching, faculty were charged with overseeing students’ out-of-classroom life. Parents entrusted their young sons to these faculty members, whom they expected to act *in loco parentis* in their interactions with the students (Komives & Woodard, 2001). Faculty were expected

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, formerly the *NASPA Journal*.

to keep a watchful eye as they lived in the dormitories and ate in the residence halls with students.

The country was booming. Construction of railroads, roads, and canals contributed to the rapid expansion to the West and hundreds of new colleges emerged across the American frontier. Similar to the early colonial colleges, the new American colleges were expected to educate the whole student—mind, body, and spirit. During this time dormitories and dining halls emerged on college campuses (Rudolph, 1962). In response to the strict, prescribed curriculum, students participated in activities such as literary societies, debate clubs, and campus publications in attempts to broaden the education that they were receiving in the classroom (Grieger, 2005). The college president assumed the responsibility, at times in conjunction with the trustees, of addressing incidents of improper behavior exhibited by students under his care. The responsibility for students' out-of-classroom behavior set the foundation for the present-day view of the student affairs profession (Leonard, 1956).

As the mid-19th century approached, many American students traveled to Germany in pursuit of advanced degrees. The German institutions, predicated on specialization, exposed American scholars to the role of the faculty as creators of knowledge, not just those who imparted existing knowledge. The seminar method of investigation, specialty focus in courses, laboratory methods of scientific teaching, and the notion of advanced degrees were components of the German system that praised the discovery of new knowledge and the specialization of research (Brickman & Lehrer, 1962).

The acceptance of the German system of higher education by American colleges significantly changed the role of the faculty member. Faculty shifted their focus from educating the whole student to developing only the minds of their young pupils

(Komives & Woodard, 2001). Spending more time in their laboratories and immersed in their respective disciplines, faculty had little interest in attending to students' out-of-classroom behavior and activities. Similarly, college trustees spent less time involved in the day-to-day affairs of the college and the college president spent more time on administrative matters. To fill the gap left by faculty and administrators, institutions created special appointments for faculty members who divided their responsibilities between teaching and attending to out-of-classroom needs and issues of students. In 1890 Harvard appointed the first full-time dean in higher education to "look after the needs of students" (Sandeen, 2001, p. 181). This began the practice of hiring nonteaching members of the academy to attend to the needs of students outside the classroom.

As American colleges transformed toward secular, practical education, opportunities for access by new populations of students emerged. The ratification of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 confirmed the notion that colleges were no longer only for the education of the clergy but had a larger purpose and responsibility to the citizens of the state (Kerr, 1963). The first Morrill Land Grant Act provided land for the establishment of colleges focusing on agriculture and the mechanical arts in efforts to bring education to rural areas. For the first time, farmers and people of the working class were granted access to higher education. The second Morrill Act provided support for the establishment of "separate but equal" African American-serving institutions in states that were opposed to integration.

Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley colleges opened their doors in 1860 to another previously denied population: women. In 1872, delayed by the building of a women's dormitory, Cornell University became the first co-educational institution in the East. These institutions adopted the collegiate traditions of faculty, 4-year curriculum, and

dormitory living; however, the curriculum tended to have more emphasis on liberal arts. Most co-educational institutions at the time established two parallel administrative units based on gender. From 1910 until the late 1950s, colleges functioned with structure that included a dean of men and a dean of women, built on the belief that men and women required separate attention based on their needs (Sandeem, 2001). During this time, dormitories, health centers, dining halls, and athletic activities also made a strong appearance on college campuses (Rudolph, 1962).

Although the number of institutions of higher education increased during the time between the two world wars, the size of the student population at these institutions remained low. As late as 1940, many state institutions had student bodies of fewer than 5,000 students (Komives & Woodard, 2001). Nonetheless, legislation passed after World War II proved to have significant impact on college enrollment.

In 1944 The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the GI Bill, opened the doors for a wave of veterans to enter American institutions of higher education. Originally intended to lessen the pressure of numerous postwar veterans attempting to enter the labor market, the GI Bill "set a precedent for making portable government student aid an entitlement, and provided a policy tool for increasing the diversity of American universities" (Komives & Woodward, 2001, p. 14). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act introduced the notion of access and affordability to higher education for all citizens.

Emphasis on higher education access and affordability allowed thousands of students from previously underrepresented groups to step onto campus grounds. Colleges and universities grew in complexity, size, and structure to accommodate the growth in enrollment. Clark Kerr (1963) wrote about the rise of a new prestigious institution that marked the era: the "multiversity." American colleges had transformed

from small communities of learners and scholars held together by one common purpose to large American universities comprised of “a whole series of communities and activities held together by a common name, a common governing board, and related purposes” (p. 1). According to Kerr, the faculty in the “multiversity” had become fractionalized and viewed themselves less as a member of the university and more as a member of a network of colleagues in their particular academic discipline. They were committed to their roles of research, with teaching and service becoming ancillary duties. The role of the “multiversity” administrator changed as well. Administrator’s roles were formalized and their daily tasks pertained more to the business of the university, which separated them from daily student contact and issues. The changing roles of faculty and administrators resulted in the creation of a segment of university staff who could focus full time on student needs and issues: the student affairs administrator (Windle, 1998).

The 1960s marked the beginnings of increased federal support and a period of enrollment growth in higher education that shaped the modern American university (Kerr, 1963) and subsequently the student affairs profession. Federal legislation such as the Higher Education Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and the Higher Education Amendments of 1992 demonstrated the federal government’s commitment to providing universal access to higher education (Komives & Woodard, 2001). Accordingly, federal support brought increased federal interest and involvement in higher education. Regulations associated with federal legislation resulted in specialized roles for student affairs administrators. In addition to meeting recordkeeping and reporting requirements, student affairs administrators were retrained or new staff members were hired to provide specialized

support and services in areas most affected by federal legislation, such as financial aid and the registrar's office (Nuss, 2001).

Increased accessibility by previously denied or underrepresented groups changed the face of the college student attending an institution of higher education. Students who entered during this time were older and more diverse than those who had come before them (Belch & Strange, 1995). The 20-year period after World War II resulted in dramatic changes in higher education and student affairs (Sandeem, 2001). Social movements during the 1960s, such as the civil rights movement, the free speech movement, and Students for a Democratic Society, brought unrest to the college campus and impacted the practice of student affairs professionals.

Student activism and social protests on college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s brought into focus the changing relationship between students and public institutions of higher education (Grieger, 2005). In a 1961 landmark case, *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*, altered the relationship between student affairs professionals and students. The court ruled that students at public institutions retain all constitutional rights when they enroll, and thus are afforded certain liberties, processes, and procedures. Prior to this case, student affairs administrators were operating under the *in loco parentis* doctrine. *Dixon* challenged and eventually abolished the long-standing doctrine of *in loco parentis*. In response to changing societal expectations and the changing student-institution relationship, student affairs administrators were expected to understand the various legal issues germane to working with students.

As universities expanded, so did the administrative units responsible for student affairs. What began as ancillary duties of faculty members grew to specialized functions that provided support to college and university students in alignment with the university's mission. Programs and services such as residence life, student activities,

financial aid, admissions, counseling, health services, and new student programs assisted in the development, transition, and support of students (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001). Most institutions consolidated these programs in a student affairs division, headed by a chief student affairs officer who reported to the president. Student affairs administrators grew to comprise one of the largest employee groups in most college and university systems (Montgomery & Lewis, 1996; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988).

Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators

As job functions and responsibilities became more complex, the need for more specialists grew to carry out the responsibilities once undertaken by generalists (Scott, R.A., 1975). The most notable expansion in the student affairs organization came at the mid-level administrator positions. Mid-level administrators in higher education account for approximately 64% of the total administrative staff positions in college and university systems (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1992). In addition to their numbers, the ethnic and racial composition of this population tends to reflect the ethnic and racial makeup of the student and community population rather than that of their senior administrative counterparts (Rosser, 2000). Rosser praised mid-level administrators as the “unsung professionals of the academy” due to the modest or lacking recognition of their high commitment, training, and adherence to excellence in their area of expertise. Often regarded as the “firing line” and “linking pin” positions, mid-level administrators are critical to the operations of any organization. Noted for their strong interpersonal skills, dependability, commitment, and developed technical skills, these individuals are the key to institutional collaboration, collegiality, and change (Young, 2007). One of the largest contingencies of mid-level administrators in the collegiate setting is found in divisions of student affairs.

Student affairs literature consistently classifies student affairs professionals into three position levels: entry-level administrators, mid-level administrators, and chief student affairs officers (CSAOs; Carpenter, 2001). Historically, research and programs in the profession have focused on the needs of entry-level staff and CSAOs, while little was known about the challenges, issues, and success of mid-level student affairs administrators. However, recently there has been a notable increase in the body of literature focusing on mid-level administrators in student affairs. Empirical research studies have explored mid-level student affairs administrators' skills and competencies (Kane, 1982; Roberts, 2003; Sermersheim, 2002; Windle, 1998), morale and intentions to leave (Rosser & Javinar, 2003), and mobility within the student affairs profession (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988). These studies have drawn attention to this valuable but sometimes forgotten group.

Student affairs professional associations have demonstrated their commitment to mid-level administrator issues and professional development by offering publications and professional development opportunities. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) commissioned a seminal monograph in 1990 to focus on the "invisible" population of mid-level student affairs administrators and challenges associated with their mid-level positions in the hierarchy. Seventeen years later, NASPA published *The Mid-Level Manager in Student Affairs*, which reexamined issues facing mid-level practitioners and focused on enhancing competencies unique to this group.

Professional associations have attempted to play a role in developing and enhancing the skills and competencies of mid-level administrators through pre-conference workshops, conference educational sessions, institutes, and academies. Recognizing the void in professional development opportunities specific to this

population, NASPA held the first Mid-Level Manager Institute for student affairs professionals in June 1990 and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) followed with their own institute in 1999. In addition to providing an opportunity for participants to discuss the “charms and challenges” of middle management, NASPA promotes its institute as “an opportunity for promising mid-level professionals to enhance and develop the skills, relationships, and dispositions that distinguish them in the profession and enable them to make more meaningful contributions to the people and programs they serve” (Southern Association for College Student Affairs, 2010, para. 1). ACPA’s institute, named after its creator Dr. Donna M. Bourassa, a former Associate Executive Director of ACPA, attempts to “promote a more advanced understanding of the principles of student affairs and provide effective management tools to excel” (ACPA, 2010, para. 5).

Each institute follows a similar format and is led by a group faculty comprised of seasoned student affairs professionals who facilitate discussions related to mid-level administrator issues and serve as mentors to participants. The curriculum for each institute varies slightly; however, topics usually include institutional culture, supervision and personnel issues, fiscal management and budget development, assessment and strategic planning, managing change, and career mapping. Several functional area associations, such as the Association for Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA) and the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) have also created specific institutes for mid-level administrators. In addition to covering some of the broad topics cited above, they also cover topics that are unique to being a mid-level professional in that particular functional area. Professional associations have continued to offer opportunities specifically tailored to the development needs of the mid-level administrator.

Approximately two thirds of student affairs professionals are still in the field five years after completing graduate school (Burns, 1982; Komives, 1992; Wood, Winston, & Polkosnik, 1985). However, due to a perceived limited opportunity for advancement, burnout, unclear job expectations, and level of pay, many student affairs professionals will leave the field during their time as a mid-level administrator (Lorden, 1998).

Losing professional staff at the mid-level administrator position can be both advantageous and costly to an academic organization. On one hand, staff turnover at this level may provide opportunities to infuse the organization with fresh management perspectives, engage in salary savings, and restructure the organization to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. On the other hand, mid-level administrators bring a wealth of experience and valuable institutional memory, and a loss at this level can result in a less loyal and knowledgeable work force, an increase in training time, and a greater incident of behavioral problems such as absenteeism and tardiness (Rosser, 2004). Staff turnover is problematic when organizations lose those whom they would prefer to keep (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000).

Retaining unmotivated, stagnant professionals can prove to be just as costly as losing quality mid-level administrators. There may be many reasons, voluntary or involuntary, for a mid-level professional to remain in a mid-level position. In either situation, it is important for those who supervise mid-level administrators to understand their employees' issues, aspirations, motivational determinants, and professional development needs. R. A. Scott (1975) suggested that, when a mid-level administrator is no longer learning or challenged, he or she becomes a liability to the organization, devoid of ideas, a sense of humor, and an attitude of assistance, and may choose to invest time and attention to activities outside of work responsibilities. A reduced commitment to professional development through continual acquisition and maintenance

of knowledge and skills can contribute to decreased motivation to perform, thus impacting opportunities for reward and advancement within the organization.

Failure to produce and maintain high quality mid-level administrators who are qualified, prepared, and available for advancement within the organization may lead to a depleted staff. Consequently, administrators may be forced to hire externally if current staff are not properly prepared for promotion. Hiring decisions by upper-level administrators impact the perceptions and beliefs held by mid-level staff with regard to their work situations and opportunities for future advancement (Johnsrud et al., 2000; Scott, 1976). Thus, promising internal staff may perceive external hires as evidence of management's unwillingness to promote from within. This perception may lead to the exodus of quality entry-level and mid-level administrators for more promising positions or opportunities outside the organization.

During a time of increasing accountability, CSAOs must show evidence of maximized performance from their human resources. If the organization seeks to reduce turnover and retain high-performing mid-level professionals, attention must be paid to the various motivational issues affecting mid-level administrator performance. Thus, understanding what keeps professional mid-level administrators motivated can provide student affairs leaders with strategies to aid in rewarding, maintaining, and retaining this important population.

Statement of the Problem

Mid-level administrators comprise the largest group of administrative professionals on college campuses today. These professionals affect the daily lives of students and contribute significantly to the overall coordination of institutional resources and activities. These "invisible leaders" are "the key to institutional collaboration, collegiality, and change because of their mid-level position" (Young, 2007, p. 5). Mid-

level administrators play an important role in helping institutions fulfill one of their primary missions: educating students. However, frustrations due to role conflict, lack of recognition, and limited opportunities for career growth and advancement continue to plague mid-level administrators (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Despite the importance of the role that they play in administering programs, services, and other functions central to the mission of the university, little research has been conducted examining the issues impacting motivation and job performance. Mid-level administrators bring a degree of experience and insight to student affairs organizations that are difficult to replace (Belch & Strange, 1995). At times, the departure of staff at this level can bring opportunities for restructuring and new ideas; however, losing professional staff at the mid-level administrator position can also be costly to an academic organization. Losing quality staff at this level in a student affairs organization may also impact the succession planning for future leadership, as well as the mentoring of new professionals in the organization. Attrition of mid-level professionals is problematic when those who are leaving are those whom the organization most wants to retain.

Similarly, mid-level administrators who do not attain rewards or perceive value in the rewards that they attain may become unmotivated, which can have a negative impact on the organization. Retaining unmotivated, dormant professionals can significantly affect the tone, manner, and style of the entire organization, and their daily performance levels can determine the quality of relationships with faculty, staff, students, and external constituents such as parents, alumni, community members, and colleagues at other institutions (Rosser, 2000; Scott, R. A., 1980). Mid-level administrators may be largely responsible for the cultivation of new, emerging professionals within the organization; thus, low-performing mid-level administrators can have a negative effect on developing and retaining newer, talented staff.

Johnsrud (1996) identified limited opportunities for advancement as a source of frustration for mid-level administrators. Although some mid-level administrators choose to stay in a mid-level position throughout their career, those who are seeking to advance in the hierarchy may encounter the likelihood of reduced opportunities for promotion due to the pyramid structure of traditional student affairs organizations. Career “plateauing” at the mid-level administrator position, intentionally or unintentionally, is inevitable for many student affairs professionals who seek to stay in the profession. Maintaining effective job performance of mid-level managers who are seeking to advance though promotion is no longer a likely option.

The primary purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the factors affecting work motivation of mid-level student affairs administrators at various career stages. The study was intended to address the following research goals: (a) identify determinants that impact work motivation and, consequently, job performance (Vroom, 1964) in mid-level student affairs administrators; and (b) explore whether these determinants differ based on the career stage of the mid-level administrator. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What motivational factors impact mid-level student affairs administrators’ performance in their work roles?
 - 1a. What outcomes do mid-level student affairs administrators perceive influence their motivation levels to perform well?
 - 1b. To what extent do mid-level student affairs administrators perceive that they are rewarded for job performance?
2. Are there differences in motivational factors depending on the career stage of mid-level student affairs administrators?

Overview of the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

A case study approach was used to provide in-depth understanding of motivational factors affecting mid-level student affairs administrators' performance. The sources of data included semistructured individual interviews with each participating administrator and documents related to their career paths (e.g., resume, organizational chart).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) contended that those who conduct qualitative inquiry bring their personal understanding (tacit theory) together with formal theory derived from the literature to bring an issue, problem, or phenomenon into focus so that generalizations can be derived. For this study, more than one theory is at work in informing the construction and the results in an effort to illuminate this group of student affairs professionals. Specifically, the concepts of motivation theory and career stage theory framed the study. Motivation theory served as a guide to identify motivational determinants affecting performance in the workplace. Career stage theory was used to inform the researcher of possible distinctions in factors affecting motivation that existed between subsets of mid-level administrators at various career stages.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to add to the literature on the motivation of mid-level administrators in general while focusing on mid-level student affairs administrators at various career stages. Previous studies have focused on mid-level administrators' job satisfaction and have relied heavily on quantitative analysis based on survey data. These methods provided a "thin description" (Geertz, 1973) of factors affecting workplace satisfaction and permitted researchers to tabulate, rank, and compare satisfiers and dissatisfiers. The focus of the present study is the specific meaning that mid-level administrators attribute to motivational factors and their perceptions of how these factors

impact their performance in the work setting, which was lacking in previous empirical studies. Qualitative methods are employed to garner a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the interaction of employee motivation and performance, the impact of positional hierarchy on motivation, and the impact of career tenure on motivation in the context of the work setting. Participant interviews provided rich detail and added meaning to particular events, situations, and actions that shape participant perceptions of what motivates them to perform.

Despite the accumulation of studies that have investigated the issue of work motivation, few have examined whether factors affecting an employee’s motivation are impacted by career stage. From a practical perspective, being able to anticipate the motivational determinants of mid-level administrators over various career stages would be useful for both employers and employees. This study will benefit employers in understanding factors that affect employee motivation, and subsequently performance, which could be useful in a multitude of realms ranging from the assignment of job responsibilities to the creation of employee acknowledgement, professional development, and reward programs. Moreover, if particular work motivators are connected to performance in some career stages more than in other stages, it might be possible to manage motivators to optimize performance. For mid-level administrators, this work may provide insight into their motivations to perform and those work variables that lead to increased motivation, which, in turn, may be helpful as they seek increased responsibility, job changes, or promotion.

Definition of Terms

The following terms or phrases are applied operationally in this dissertation with these stated meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO). The CSAO is the key administrator responsible for providing leadership to a division of student affairs. This position most often reports to the institution's president or chief academic officer (Sandeen, 2000).

Mid-level administrator. In a college or university the term encompasses mid-level student affairs administrators but also includes other academic and nonacademic support personnel who are not faculty. This group may include staff from academic support units such as the library, information technology, and cooperative education, as well as staff from business/administrative services and external affairs (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999).

Mid-level student affairs administrator. Mid-level student affairs administrators are professionals who do not function as part of the university's executive leadership but, as part of their primary duties, supervise other professional staff and manage various programs (Penn, 1990) in a student affairs organization. These administrators either report directly to the CSAO or to a person who reports directly to the CSAO (Fey, 1991). In larger, highly structured divisions, mid-level student affairs administrators may be two persons removed from reporting to the CSAO. The mid-level administrator is neither an entry-level professional nor the CSAO (Young, 1990). (In previous studies these persons have sometimes been referred to as *managers* or *professionals*. For the purpose of this study, the term *administrators* is used in place of those terms, except in direct quotes from cited authors, where their original terms are retained.)

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I presents the background and problem statement, describes the value of the study, and identifies the conceptual framework. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature addressing (a) mid-level student affairs administrators and issues affecting their work lives, (b) motivation

theory and how motivation impacts job performance, and (c) career stage models and impact of career stages on work attitudes, motivation, and performance. Chapter III describes the methodology used in the study, including information on the case study approach, the selection of participants, and the methods used by the researcher for data collection and analysis. Chapter IV presents the results of the study and the analysis of the data. Chapter V provides a summary of significant findings, a discussion of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The administration of student affairs programs and services has evolved from marginal or ancillary duties of faculty members to specialized staff performing functions central to effective institutions of higher education. Professional student affairs administrators work in collaboration with faculty and administrators in “making students’ educational experiences intellectually stimulating, practically applicable, and personally meaningful” (Winston et al., 2001, p. 5). The continued expansion of higher education has resulted in the growth of student affairs organizations. As the complexity of student affairs divisions has increased, so has the specialization of student affairs professionals’ roles and functions (Komives & Woodward, 2001).

Functional areas housed within a student affairs division vary from campus to campus; however, they typically encompass areas such as residence life, student activities, multicultural services, admissions, recreational sports, and new student orientation. In addition to supporting the institution’s mission, student affairs professionals have traditionally been expected to maintain order on campus, assist students in coping with the emotional demands of academic life and personal growth, and provide safe and comfortable housing. Winston et al. (2001) suggested that the traditional roles of student affairs administrators have been expanded to include responsibility for student learning and creating an inclusive campus for underrepresented students. To accomplish these vital functions, student affairs professionals must perform effectively to meet the needs of students and their institutions.

Much of the student affairs literature has focused on entry-level student affairs professionals and CSAOs, often overlooking an important segment of professionals:

mid-level administrators. Mid-level student affairs administrators play a vital role on college and university campuses. In their various work roles they are charged with selecting, training, and developing staff; implementing policy and programs; ensuring communication up and down the hierarchy; and providing leadership and direction to specific functional areas while maintaining a broad institutional view on issues (Mills, 2000). Even with their various responsibilities, mid-level student affairs professionals report satisfaction with their jobs (Rosser, 2000). However, frustrations associated with their mid-level position have the potential to impact motivation and job performance. This study's focus was to explore motivational factors that influence mid-level student affairs administrators' performance in their work roles.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of pertinent literature to build a framework for understanding mid-level administrators and factors that affect their work motivation. This review is organized into three sections. The first section provides information about mid-level administrators in higher education, including defining mid-level administration, past research, and issues that affect their work lives, such as how institution type affects the nature of student affairs work. The second section addresses motivation in the work place and provides an overview of various motivational theories, with a specific focus on Vroom's expectancy theory, which was used to structure this study. The third section focuses on career stage theory and the lens that it provides to analyze differing work attitudes.

Mid-Level Administrators in Higher Education

R. A. Scott (1980) described mid-level administrators as the “unheralded heroes who in times of student demonstration and faculty absence keep their institutions functioning. By the quality of service and information they provide, they also help determine institutional tone and style” (p. 387). Buried in the middle of the

organizational structure, their hard work, commitment to excellence in their area of expertise, and high performance often go unnoticed. They are known as the “invisible leaders,” not high enough in the structure to command respect through positional authority and not low enough in the structure to be easily replaceable (Rosser, 2004; Young, 2007). The invisibility of mid-level administrators extends beyond their campuses, as they have also been largely ignored in higher education literature.

The literature on mid-level student affairs administrators is deficient when compared to studies focused on entry-level and senior-level administrators. Kane (1982) found little research had been conducted regarding mid-level administrators in higher education, including those in student affairs. In Kane’s review of the literature the most extensive work on mid-level administrators in higher education was conducted by R. A. Scott (1975, 1980), who asserted that neither mid-level administrators nor their needs were well understood. Between 1963 and 1988 only one article listed in the *Index of the NASPA Journal* was identified as relating specifically to mid-level administrators. A decade after Scott’s extensive studies, Young (1990) wrote that “very little has been written about the success of student affairs mid-managers and few, if any, programs about this topic have been offered at recent national conferences of NASPA and ACPA” (p. v). Almost 20 years after the research conducted by R. A. Scott (1980) and Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) restated that mid-level administrators were important but “virtually ignored in the higher education literature” (p. 1).

This case study was an effort to expand the literature related to mid-level student affairs administrators in higher education. One of the challenges in conducting research on mid-level administrators is the difficulty in defining the term (Fey, 1991).

Defining Mid-Level Administrators

The most complicated problem in studying mid-level administrators is determining how to define them. Young (1990) contended that, despite the importance of mid-level administrators in student affairs, efforts to provide a precise and stable definition of the population remains elusive. The absence of a common operational definition of *mid-level administrator* not only affects the inter-institutional or national study of the population; it hinders comparability and application of results from past studies. There are many reasons for the apparent difficulty in defining mid-level administrators; the most prominent issue is the lack of consensus regarding which criteria should be applied to define the population. Past researchers have used position title, position in the organizational hierarchy, tenure in the profession, and job function to describe mid-level administrators.

Position title. One of the most widely used characteristics for identifying mid-level administrators is position title.

Academic or non-academic support personnel within the structure of higher education organizations (i.e., directors and coordinators of admissions, institutional research, registrars, business officers, computing and technology, human resources, communications, alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling services, financial aid, student housing, development and planned giving). (Rosser, 2004, p. 324)

Kraus (1983) contended that mid-level administrators may hold the title of director, assistant director, assistant dean, associate dean, vice president, or “assistant to” another person.

One of the hazards in using only position titles to identify mid-level administrators is the lack of consistency in their use in the student affairs profession. For example, an Assistant Director of Housing at one institution may be a mid-level position at one institution but an entry-level position at another institution. Titles are more likely to be comparable within an institution than between institutions, thus making

it difficult to categorize mid-level administrators based on job title alone. Young (1990) agreed that position titles do not provide much information about mid-level administrators and, at times, may serve only to enhance or cloak the status of staff and functional areas. As illustrated, using position title as the sole identifier of a mid-level administrator fails to take into account other characteristics, such as position within the organization.

Position in the hierarchy. Most divisions of student affairs resemble the traditional model of organizational structures: a pyramid with many entry-level positions at the base, mid-level positions in the middle, and the CSAO leading the division at the peak (Benke & Disque, 1990). Thus, mid-level administrators are positioned in the middle of the organizational structure. Consequently, structural position within the organization has often been used by educational researchers as a measure to identify mid-level administrators.

One problem in using position in the hierarchy to identify mid-level administrators is the lack of consensus among researchers regarding where the boundaries between levels of administrators should be drawn. Forbes (1984) stated that mid-level administrators are the people between the first level of supervisors and the top executives. Young (1990) proposed that mid-level administrators are situated between the CSAO and the entry-level professionals. To complicate the issue even further, Young (1990) posited that a CSAO may be considered a mid-level administrator if the CSAO does not hold a position in the presidential cabinet and instead reports to the chief academic officer or business officer.

Ambler (2000) stressed the importance of organizational symmetry in divisions of student affairs, suggesting that “officers of an organization holding positions of similar importance or value should be located in the same administrative stratum”

(p. 128). He conveyed that mid-level student affairs administrators must perceive themselves as equals among themselves and other mid-level administrators to permit effective interaction and collaboration on programs and services. Unfortunately, organizations and structures differ among institutions of higher education, making it difficult to compare mid-level positions at one institution to those at the next institution.

By virtue of their position in the hierarchy, mid-level administrators are expected to link the vertical and horizontal levels of their organizations (Austin, 1984b).

However, using position within the student affairs hierarchy alone fails to capture the boundary spanning roles of mid-level administrators. Structural position, without attention to other characteristics, may also inadvertently capture persons not considered mid-level administrators, such as entry-level professionals who may appear to be situated in the middle of the structure but whose job function and job tenure align primarily with their entry-level status.

Tenure in the profession. McDade (1987) posited that student affairs administrators can be separated into three distinct ranks: entry-level professionals, mid-level professionals, and the CSAO. These ranks are often based on tenure in the student affairs profession. Individuals often assess their career progression from the time they enter their profession because they are able to transfer rank and professional tenure status to other organizations (Stumpf & Rabinowitz, 1981). J. E. Scott (2000) defined entry-level professionals as those who are usually in the first 5 years of their careers and mid-managers as those with at least 5 to 8 years of full-time experience.

The ranks mentioned above fail to account for the person who may be classified as an entry-level professional because of tenure in the profession but hold a mid-level position. It is not uncommon at smaller institutions to find a new professional serving in a mid-level administrator role, supervising staff and program areas (Young, 1990).

The blending of measures used to define entry-level, mid-level, and CSAOs has presented challenges in identifying mid-level administrators. For example, an entry-level professional is commonly defined by years of tenure in the profession—usually less than 5 years (Roberts, 2003; Waple, 2006), whereas mid-level and CSAOs are often defined by position in the hierarchy.

Job function. Professional tenure assists in defining mid-level administrators but some researchers contend that job function contributes more to the definition. In efforts to distinguish mid-level administrators from their faculty colleagues, Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) identified mid-level administrators by the administrative units and/or functional areas in which they work. Mid-level administrators in higher education are found in traditional student affairs areas such as residence life, student activities, Greek life, and Dean of Student offices; typical student services areas such as admissions, registrar's office, financial aid, and bursar's office; academic services areas such as the learning skills center, career center, and writing center; business/administrative services such as human resources, accounting, and payroll; and external affairs areas such as alumni affairs and development offices. Penn (1990) noted that, within these various areas of specialization, there is a broad range of role expectations and job functions.

Young (1990) stated that mid-level management is a form of administration. Thus, the term itself refers to the administrative role of a mid-level administrator (Young, 2007). One of the most distinguishing characteristics of mid-level administrators is the tasks in which they engage. Penn (1990) characterized mid-level administrators as “those administrative staff who do not function as part of the institution's executive leadership but who do, as part of their primary duties, hire and supervise other staff and manage various programs” (p. 44). Staff supervision and program management were identified as key responsibilities of mid-level administrators.

Similarly, Kane (1982) defined a mid-level administrator as an individual responsible for the direction, control, or supervision of one or more student affairs functions and staff.

The management of professional staff continues to be a unique identifier of a mid-level administrator. As entry-level professionals move to mid-level positions, their responsibilities frequently change from the management of students to the management of professional staff (Penn, 1990). Austin (1984b) found that mid-level administrators supervise assistants and first-line administrators, as well as supervising nonprofessional staff. The supervision of professional staff seems to be a crucial distinction between entry-level and mid-level administrators; however, Young (1990) cautioned researchers against using the criterion of staff supervision to limit the definition. Such a generalization would eliminate mid-level administrators at smaller institutions who may be responsible for multiple program areas but are not engaged in professional staff supervision. To account for mid-level administrators in smaller organizations, Penn (1990) modified his definition of mid-level administrators to include management of staff and/or management of one or more student affairs functional areas.

In addition to staff supervision, mid-level administrators are often characterized by their management of one or more functional areas. Belch and Strange (1995) identified mid-level administrators as those who are “involved in executing functions that affect the daily lives of students and contribute significantly to the overall coordination of institutional resources and activities” (p. 208). These functions are expressed in the form of programs and services usually housed in one or more functional areas. Opinions vary as to whether mid-level administrators, in their function as program managers, are moving from a specialist position to a generalist position. Forbes (1984) contended that, as their responsibilities for multiple program areas increase, mid-level professionals begin to specialize in administration rather than functional expertise.

Young (1990) disagreed, stating that this distinction is not characteristic of student affairs mid-level administrators who are commonly rising in the mid-level administrator ranks as specialized function directors responsible for overseeing only one functional area.

In the management of these functional areas, researchers have emphasized several roles distinctive to mid-level administrators. Mid-level administrators are responsible for ensuring that the visions, policies, and values of senior administrators are translated into effective services for students (Ellis & Moon, 1991). Interpretation and implementation of institutional policy is a common characteristic of mid-level administrators (Scott, R. A., 1975). However, mid-level administrators are rarely involved in the creation of policy, which can be a point of frustration for them (Johnsrud, 1996), an issue that is discussed later in this chapter. In addition, budget management is commonly seen as a job function that differentiates mid-level administrators from entry-level professionals. Due to their roles as managers of programs and/or functional areas, mid-level administrators are typically responsible for managing funds (Mills, 2000). Creating an annual budget, executing departmental objectives within given financial constraints, developing fiscal contingency plans, and maintaining accurate financial records are expectations of mid-level administrators who have budget responsibilities (Mills, 2000). In a case study examining the variety of perceptions about mid-level administrators at Baldwin-Wallace College, Lucas (1990) defined mid-level administrators as those who “supervised several people and controlled a line item budget within the division” (p. 73). Young (2007) emphasized that mid-level administrators must be good fiscal stewards by being accountable and creative in their spending.

In addition to staff supervision and program oversight, Young (2007) added that the 21st-century mid-level administrator must be able to bring about conditions and

environments to influence student learning directly. He posited that the field of student affairs work has changed to one focused on students and their learning and contended that mid-level administrators must renew their roles as educators. Mid-level administrators must no longer take a subservient role to faculty but be equal to faculty in providing intentional learning experiences for students. Young concluded that mid-level managers have a responsibility to “bring alive” the mission of the university, especially as it relates to student learning.

The lack of a common definition has challenged researchers seeking to compare empirical evidence from past studies about contextual similarities of mid-level administrators. Studies focusing on job function may illuminate characteristics of that particular administrative specialty but are frequently used to overgeneralize to all middle level administrators (Sagaria, 1986). Conversely, studies focusing on tenure in the profession may not be applicable to particular functional area mid-level administrators (Young, 1990). However due to the size and impact of this population on the student affairs profession, research efforts to understand mid-level administrators continue. Numerous studies focusing on mid-level administrators can be found in the literature of the past three decades.

Mid-Level Administrators in the Literature

In 1980, Robert A. Scott published one of the first comprehensive works focusing on mid-level administrators. His study was prompted by the growth in expenditures associated with an increasing collegiate administration. Scott recognized that most of the growth occurred at the middle-level of administration in response to the new demands on collegiate institutions. He referred to mid-level administrators as the “lords, squires, and yeomen” of the college setting. He used this metaphor to suggest that, similar to the English middle class, mid-level administrators were caught in the

middle of the status hierarchy, with another level of rank on each flank. Whereas the English lords, squires, and yeomen were caught between the peasant and nobles, mid-level administrators were caught between senior-level administrators and entry-level professionals. R. A. Scott (1980) reported that the position of mid-level administrators in the hierarchy limited their opportunities for mobility.

In addition to their limited chances for advancement, R. A. Scott (1980) found mid-level administrators were also frustrated by a sense of disregard by faculty and administrators on their home campus. Feeling unappreciated on their own campuses, mid-level administrators sought solace in professional associations where they cultivated relationships with colleagues, engaged in training opportunities, and received recognition and rewards.

R. A. Scott (1980) discovered additional frustrations felt by mid-level administrators, including lack of recognition for accomplishments, low pay, lack of authority commensurate with responsibility, and lack of direction from upper-level administration. Scott cautioned that, if mid-level administrators' frustrations remained unaddressed, their institutional loyalty and organizational commitment could be affected. Scott commented that frustrations may lead them to tolerate ambiguity or become ineffective in their role, "the feeling of powerlessness tends to encourage middle managers to become rules-minded and defensive about their domain" (p. 395). Given a mid-level administrator's potential to impact an entire organization, defensiveness and/or a propensity to become strictly rules minded are not characteristics desired in a mid-level administrator. Scott called for understanding of the nature and role of mid-level administrators, the "unheralded heroes" of the academy.

Beginning in 1990, professional associations such as NASPA and ACPA demonstrated interest in the needs, issues, and challenges of mid-level practitioners.

NASPA commissioned a monograph, *The Invisible Leaders: Student Affairs Mid-Managers*. In this monograph Young (1990) acknowledged a need to learn more about mid-level management and the mid-level manager in student affairs to assist in their retention and success. Due to the sparse research on mid-level administrators, chapter authors were challenged to ground their research in the literature, which allowed the authors to identify several suggestions for future research pertaining to mid-level administrators in student affairs. The monograph addressed the challenges and issues surrounding mid-level administrators, including the diversity of the population, challenges of structural organizational advancement and other mobility issues, skills and competencies of successful mid-level administrators, positional and institutional factors affecting the work of mid-level administrators, factors that contribute to mid-level administrator job satisfaction, and professional development of mid-level administrators. Young (1990) acknowledged that the diversity in age, needs, experience, and education of mid-level administrators made it difficult to identify one strategy to train, supervise, and support this population effectively. Following Young's monograph, numerous studies were directed at developing and supporting mid-level administrators.

Skill identification and development of mid-level administrators. Vroom (1964) proposed that, for a person to achieve a high level of performance, that person must possess both the ability and the motivation to perform. R. A. Scott (1980) stated that, given the growth in the number of mid-level administrators on college campuses, the lack of well-defined essential skills was most severely felt at that level. The variation in responsibilities, job functions, experiences, and career aspirations has made it difficult to determine one set of skills required for a mid-level administrator to be successful (Roberts, 2003). However, the following studies were attempts to identify the

skills and competencies necessary for a mid-level student affairs administrator to perform effectively.

Kane (1982) surveyed mid-level administrators to identify their professional skill attainment and needs for further development. The survey instrument listed 64 skills in the following seven categories: leadership, fiscal management, professional development, communication, personnel management, research and evaluation, and student contact. The responses to the surveys were grouped by respondent's functional area, sex, and type of institution. Regardless of functional area, participants identified leadership skills and personnel management as *very important* and research and evaluation skills as less than *very important*. Men and women practitioners agreed that leadership, fiscal management, personnel management, communication, and student contact were *very important*. However, significant differences were found between men and women in two categories. Men placed a greater importance on fiscal management and women found professional development skills to be more important than did their male counterparts. Participants from public institutions reported all skill categories, with the exception of research and assessment, as *very important*. In contrast, respondents from public institutions cited only three categories as *very important*: leadership skills, personnel management skills, and communication skills. All respondents indicated a need for further skill development in 38 of the 64 skills. Kane compiled a list of skill development activities most employed by mid-level administrators. This list included conferences, reading, student involvement, discussion with colleagues, and workshops.

Windle (1998) conducted research to assess the performance, and need for further development, of various skills related to mid-level administrators' work roles. Windle surveyed mid-level administrators, their staffs, and their supervisors in an effort to provide context within which individualized plans could be constructed for further

skill development. Windle found that mid-level administrators perceived themselves to have room for improvement and recognized a need for further development in the performance of various management skills, including fiscal management, professional development, and research and evaluation. The researcher discovered that subordinates and supervisors alike were satisfied with mid-managers' performance of various management skills and competencies but also identified room for enhancement of the various management skills. Mid-level administrators were found to be strong communicators and leaders and to exhibit high levels of competence in skills and competencies that were relationship oriented, such as demonstrating high levels of professional behavior. Finally, mid-level administrators were perceived to be committed to improving their skills and competencies through professional development

Responding to the changes in higher education environment, Roberts (2003) expanded on Kane's research and included the categories of diversity, technology, assessment and evaluation, faculty/staff collaboration, and legal issues. The study, which included entry-level and senior student affairs officers in addition to mid-level administrators, assessed the perceived performance of variety of skills and the methods that student affairs professionals employed to develop those skills. Roberts found that mid-level administrators were more similar to senior student affairs officers than to entry-level professionals in their perception of skill attainment. The greatest difference between entry level-professionals and mid-level administrators was evident in the categories of personnel management, fiscal management, and legal issues. Roberts suggested that this difference may be indicative of the responsibilities common to mid-level administrators versus those of entry-level professionals. Roberts also suggested that, as mid-level administrators progress in their careers, they should pay particular

attention to improving their personnel management, fiscal management, legal issues, research, and evaluation and assessment skills.

The preceding quantitative studies identified a common set of skill categories needed by mid-level administrators: fiscal management, leadership, personnel management, student contact, research and evaluation, professional development, communication (Kane, 1982; Windle, 1998), legal issues, technology, and diversity (Roberts, 2003). In addition to focusing on the tangible skills and competencies that mid-level administrators should perform, there is a growing interest in understanding issues affecting student affairs mid-level administrators' morale, satisfaction, and intentions to leave.

Mid-level administrator morale. In the early 1990s, higher education was feeling the pressure of the economy, leading to a period of retrenchment characterized by widespread budget cuts and downsizing. Impacted by these cuts were mid-level administrators, who were expected to do more work with less staff and resources. Morale of mid-level faculty and staff began to suffer (Johnsrud, 1996). Studies concentrating on the construct of morale and its impact on collegiate mid-level administrators' job satisfaction and intentions to leave emerged in the literature.

Johnsrud (1996) proposed that studying morale in employees matters, given the demonstrated propensity of morale to affect work performance. Johnsrud suggested that the morale of administrative staff was a critical issue for colleges and universities to consider if they were interested in maximum performance from their human resources. Morale was presented as a multidimensional construct consisting of individual perceptions of a variety of work life issues. Johnsrud concluded that collegiate mid-level administrators have a distinct work life experience that could well affect their morale.

In her review of the literature on mid-level administrators, Johnsrud (1996) found that most were generally satisfied with their job. However, she identified three sources of frustration commonly held by mid-level administrators: the mid-level nature of their role, the lack of recognition for their contributions, and their limited opportunities for career growth or advancement.

Mid-level administrators find themselves in “the middle,” positioned between those to whom they report, who create policy and make decisions, and those whom they supervise, who implement the decisions. Johnsrud (1996) found that mid-level administrators were responsible for providing data to make decisions but were rarely involved in the decision-making process. Mid-level administrators reported frustration that they held expertise in their particular functional area but were rarely involved in the decisions impacting their area. Adding to this frustration, mid-level administrators were then expected to support and carry out decisions of which they had no part in making.

The second source of frustration for mid-level administrators was the perceived lack of recognition for their work. Johnsrud (1996) described that mid-level administrators reported feeling unappreciated for the competencies that they brought and the hard work that they performed in their roles. Mid-level administrators’ frustrations arising from not being included in decision making resulted in them feeling a lack of recognition for their expertise. In addition, mid-level administrators reported feeling a lack of respect by higher level administrators and faculty members.

The third source of frustration for mid-level administrators was a lack of opportunities for career development and advancement. Student affairs professionals consider career advancement to be important and they expect to change positions (Benke & Disque, 1990).

In a study examining the career mobility of student affairs professionals, Sagaria and Johnsrud (1988) found that mobility steadily decreases during a career. They attributed this decrease to issues of individual choice (e.g., higher-level positions provided more challenges and benefits, consideration of non-work issues such as family and/or caring for elder parents) and the availability of fewer position vacancies. The study also revealed that women moved intra-institutionally more frequently than from one institution to another institution. Women were more likely to be promoted to the CSAO position from within their institution than they were to be recruited from another institution.

As mid-level administrators progress in their career, the likelihood of reduced opportunities for promotion due to a pyramid-structured student affairs organization (Young, 1990) is high. Frustration occurs when there are more employees who would like to advance than there are positions to fill. Consequently, many mid-level administrators are forced to seek advancement opportunities outside the institution.

Mid-level administrators were also frustrated by the perceived lack of opportunities and support for professional growth. Mid-level administrators desired to enhance their skills to enhance performance in their current role and to develop skills and competencies to take on new and more challenging positions. Johnsrud (1996) suggested that organizations offer and support opportunities for the professional development of administrators.

Work Life Issues Affecting Mid-Level Administrators

In addition to the major sources of frustrations identified by Johnsrud (1996), studies have highlighted issues important to the administrative work life and behavior of mid-level administrators. These issues include recognition for competence, support and opportunities for career development and advancement, the quality of relationships with

internal and external constituencies (Johnsrud et al., 2000), salary, and institutional type (Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

These work life issues may affect the daily performance and behavior of mid-level administrator and, consequently, the tone and tenor of the academic enterprise in which they serve (Rosser, 2000). In addition, studies have shown that the perceptions that mid-level administrators have of their work life have implications for their overall morale, satisfaction, and, ultimately, their intentions to remain in or leave their current position (Johnsrud & Edwards, 2001; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

Recognition. In their study of mid-level administrators, Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) found recognition to be one of the most powerful predictors of morale. Mid-level administrators want to feel that they are recognized for their competence and the contributions that they make to the organization. Johnsrud and Rosser concluded that, to enhance morale, mid-level administrators must perceive that their ability and efforts are valued and appreciated by the institution.

Regrettably, past studies have revealed that mid-level administrators believed that they received little respect for their administrative efforts and contributions. Johnsrud (1996) recognized mid-level administrators as a well-educated group who possess large amounts of responsibility and work hard but whose efforts do not translate into recognition for a job well done. R. A. Scott (1975) contended that a lack of respect from their academic counterparts was a source of frustration for mid-level administrators. Mid-level administrators alleged that they were not taken seriously on their home campuses. These feelings were based on the perceived lack of recognition for their accomplishments, low pay, limited chances for advancement, lack of authority commensurate with responsibilities, and lack of direction from supervisors (Scott, R. A., 1975). Ellis and Moon (1991) quoted Thomas's (1978) assertion that mid-level

administrators held a “stepsister status” that was accorded to them by senior administrators and faculty. R. A. Scott (1975) commented that a mid-level administrator’s self-esteem and sense of mastery as a professional is developed on campus but confirmed off campus. Feeling disrespected on their campuses, mid-level administrators often turn to professional associations for the respect and acknowledgement that they desire. Professional associations play a major part in enhancing the identity, information, status, and recognition of mid-level administrators. R. A. Scott (1980) warned that this dependence on professional associations could place a strain on the degree of institutional loyalty or organizational commitment shown by mid-level managers.

Conversely, other studies have indicated that mid-level administrators’ reported that they were recognized and respected at their institutions. In Lucas’s (1990) study on the perceptions of mid-level administrators at Baldwin-Wallace College, faculty reported that the role of the mid-level student affairs administrator had grown in significance over the past 10 years and most reported that the work of the student affairs mid-level administrator was as important as their own. Similarly, students in the study reported that they appreciated the work of the mid-level administrators and some considered choosing student affairs as a career as a result of their interactions with these and other student affairs professionals.

Similarly, Rosser and Javinar (2003) reported that student affairs leaders felt acknowledged for their contributions to the institution, which positively affected their level of satisfaction and morale. Rosser and Javinar found that, in spite of the strong pressures to perform reported by mid-level administrators, these administrators believed that they had the authority to make decisions and considered that the leadership in their functional unit was strong.

In a national study of mid-level administrators in higher education, Rosser (2004) indicated that “mid-level leaders enjoy the trust, guidance, and constructive feedback on their performance from senior administrators, and they respond well to positive mentoring relationships” (p. 331). Mid-level administrators enjoyed the attention and recognition from senior-level administrators.

Although no specific reason for the discrepancy in mid-level administrators’ perceptions has been given, Young (1990) speculated that subjective impressions based on contacts with a few faculty members may lead mid-level administrator to feel disrespected at their home institution. Thus, Young called for studies using objective measures, similar to those of Rosser and Javinar (2003) and Rosser (2004), to capture the perceptions of mid-level administrators. Young (2007) hypothesized that the feeling of “disrespect” is not unique to mid-level administrators and is part of a larger cultural perception in student affairs. Drawing from the opinion of Woodard, Love, and Komives (2000), Young proposed that the profession of student affairs operates under a self-marginalizing, disempowering, self-pitying culture that fosters a victim mentality and a sense of powerlessness in student affairs professionals. He concluded, “Disrespect does not have to come from others; we inflict enough of it on ourselves” (p. 11).

Mid-level administrators want their work to be meaningful and their opinions to be valued (Johnsrud et al., 2000). Colleges and universities must find ways to recognize the contributions of mid-level administrators to their functional units, divisions, and the institution as a whole (Johnsrud, 1996).

Opportunities for career development and advancement. Opportunities for career development and advancement continue to be recurrent issues affecting the satisfaction and morale of mid-level administrators (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Mid-level administrator morale is affected by the degree to which these administrators perceive

that they receive support for career growth (Johnsrud et al., 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999). Mid-level administrators in student affairs value the opportunity to grow as professionals.

As previously stated, one source of frustration for mid-level administrators is the lack of advancement opportunities available in student affairs (Johnsrud, 1996). The pyramid structure typical to divisions of student affairs constrains the number of advancement opportunities for mid-level administrators in higher education (Benke & Disque, 1990). Consequently, mid-level administrators seek opportunities for professional development in efforts to prepare for the next advancement opportunity. Gaining skills and experience is not only beneficial to carrying out the responsibilities of the position currently held by the administrator, but also prepares the administrator to take on new and more challenging positions. Support for professional development and skill attainment may not always result in job promotion within the organization but the positive impact on morale is noted (Johnsrud et al., 2000). Johnsrud (1996) found that mid-level administrators wanted to advance their skills and acquire new ones.

Due to the limited opportunities for advancement, mid-level administrators will either seek a horizontal or vertical move to another institution or find continuing ways to be renewed in their current position (Bardwick, 1986; Johnsrud, 1996; Komives, 1992; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988).

Plateauing in a mid-level position, either voluntarily or involuntarily, is a reality for many mid-level administrators in student affairs. Mid-level administrators may encounter two types of career plateaus: structural and content (Bardwick, 1986). Bardwick (1986) suggested that an employee reaches a structural plateau either when the employee does not possess the skills or competencies to move up in the hierarchy or, more frequently, because there are no open opportunities to move up. Appelbaum and

Santiago (1997) contended that structural plateaus can be categorized as organizational or personal. Employees reach organizational plateaus when they have the skills, abilities, and desire to advance but are prevented from doing so based on the limited opportunities for advancement. Alternatively, an employee who does not desire to advance to a higher level is personally plateaued (Applebaum & Santiago, 1997).

“If student affairs professionals choose to climb the organizational chart, they need to be prepared for an inevitable career plateau” (Hughes, 2004, p. 137). Due to the pyramid-type structure of student affairs organizations, a limited number of CSAO positions exist in the profession, thus limiting the opportunities for mid-level professionals to advance. Consequently, many mid-level professionals will reach an organizational or structural plateau and remain in the middle of the student affairs hierarchy for the remainder of their careers.

Many mid-level administrators will reach personal plateaus and choose to remain in their mid-level positions for the duration of their career. Collins (2009) studied female mid-level student affairs administrators who turned down opportunities to serve as CSAOs. Through structured interviews with six women in various mid-level positions, Collins found that concerns over time management, increased politics at higher-level positions, and the fear of spending even less time with their families contributed to the participants’ decisions to remain in their mid-level positions.

Hughes (2004) contended that, for every student affairs professional who has remained in the same position for 15 years and has continued to learn, grow, and contribute to the field, there is another professional with similar years in the profession who is bored, uninspired, and unhappy. Bardwick (1986) suggested that an employee reaches a content plateau when after achieving expertise in the field or functional area but may become bored with work roles. Bardwick recommended that management

continue to offer opportunities for employees to learn and develop professionally to reduce the risk of content plateauing.

The lack of opportunities for advancement is a major source of frustration for mid-level administrators. In a study that examined the relationship among demographic, structural, and perceptual factors posited to affect morale, Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) found that mid-level administrators' perceptions of mobility, including "feeling stuck" and "intent to leave," explained their morale. When an employee perceives a lack of opportunity for growth and advancement, the employee's morale suffers. Johnsrud and Rosser also contended that the study findings supported the concept that morale affects behavior, such as leaving one's position, or indicators of behavior, such as intent to leave.

Opportunities for personal and professional growth within the institution have been found to be key to positive morale (Rosser, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Komives (1992) suggested engaging mid-level staff in opportunities such as writing for scholarly publications, mentoring younger staff, and involvement in professional associations as ways to promote professional renewal and development. Hughes (2004) discussed the importance of women in student affairs at mid career seeking a mentor and engaging in mentoring new professionals early in their careers as a way to combat low morale related to career plateaus. Hughes suggested that women at mid-career may have significant wisdom to impart to new professionals and students interested in the student affairs profession. Engaging in mentoring opportunities can be extremely rewarding to those mid-level student affairs administrators who may be learning to manage a career plateau (Hughes, 2004).

Relationships with constituents. The roles and functions of mid-level administrators vary greatly. Depending on their job functions, mid-level administrators

may interact with a variety of internal constituents (students, faculty, and staff) and external constituents (parents, alumni, community agencies). In addition, due to their unique position in the middle of the hierarchy, they have the opportunity to work and interact with a variety of persons, including level staff, other mid-level administrators, and senior level administrators.

Building and maintaining positive relationships is an important characteristic of mid-level administrators. Ellis and Moon (1991) spoke to the importance of mid-level managers mastering the art of building alliances. They contended that, to survive in the active and fast-paced environment of higher education administration, a mid-level administrator must be able to make contacts, link people with ideas, get and give information, and give support to the projects of others.

Roberts and Winniford (2007) also stressed the importance of mid-level administrators' relationship building. They suggested that mid-level administrators "typically are the ones who implement policy, oversee programs and make connections all over campus, so their relationships with others can add to or detract from their ultimate success" (p. 256).

Rosser (2004) determined that mid-level administrators who had developed positive relationships with senior administrators, faculty, staff, students and external constituents tended to have higher levels of satisfaction with their work experiences and were less likely to leave the organization.

In a study exploring the relationship between morale and mid-level administrators' intent to leave, Johnsrud et al. (2000) found that work relationships with supervisors and colleagues (which included open communication processes and sense of teamwork) were important to mid-level administrators and had a significant impact on morale. When mid-level administrators perceived that they had quality relationships

with supervisors and other colleagues, their morale tended to be higher. In a study focusing on mid-level student affairs administrators, Rosser and Javinar (2003) reported similar findings, indicating that the relationships that student affairs leaders developed within and between their work units were very important to work life and positively impacted morale and satisfaction.

White, Webb, and Young (1990) found that mid-level administrators who continued to have student advising and program development as part of their jobs valued their relationships with students and rated their role as student development educator as the highest source of intrinsic job satisfaction.

Salary. Rosser and Javinar (2003) found that student affairs leaders enjoyed their work environment and considered their salary level to be adequate. However, salary continues to be a perennial issue that impacts satisfaction in mid-level administrators. Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) found that salary was identified by administrators as the single most important issue affecting morale. However, they suggested that perceptions about salary may be more important than actual dollars. Administrators are more concerned with equity in pay in relation to their colleagues than trying to achieve high pay. Morale is negatively impacted when it is perceived that there are inequities in compensation or if compensation is based on criteria other than performance and workload. In a 2003 study, Rosser and Javinar found that mid-level administrators who were paid higher salaries had a lower morale, although due to their institutional loyalty and high commitment, they were less likely to leave the institution. Rosser (2004) suggested further investigation to ascertain what contributes to the low morale of administrators who are paid higher salaries. The low morale of these administrators is a concern, especially with the potential to influence work-related behavior.

Institutional fit. In a study looking at structural variables in relation to mid-level administrator morale, Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) found that institutional type had a significant impact on morale. Staff at larger research institutions had lower morale than did their colleagues at smaller institutions, and staff at community colleges had significantly more positive morale than those employed at baccalaureate and research institutions. Johnsrud and Rosser proposed that this finding may indicate differences in work climate or supervisory styles or may suggest that the level of morale is negatively correlated to the size of the institution.

The role of institutional fit for student affairs professionals has gained increased attention in recent years. Hirt (2006) engaged in a series of comprehensive studies examining how work life varied for student affairs professionals based on the type of institution in which they served, thus exploring the intersection between the work of student affairs professionals and the organizational setting. The studies were conducted at research universities, liberal arts colleges, religiously affiliated institutions, comprehensive colleges and universities, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), community colleges, and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSI). Hirt focused on several aspects of student affairs work: the nature of student affairs work, the work environment, the pace of work, how work gets done, the nature of relationships, and the nature of rewards. Particularly relevant to the study was her discussion concerning the nature of relationships and the nature of rewards by institutional type. These two work variables were identified as contributing to morale and satisfaction (Grant, 2006).

With regard to relationships, student affairs practitioners at religiously affiliated institutions, HBCUs, and community colleges had greater collaboration with their faculty counterparts than did their colleagues at liberal arts colleges, comprehensive colleges and universities, research universities, and HSIs. Relationships with students

also varied according to institutional type. Practitioners at research universities perceived their relationships with students and other student affairs colleagues outside their functional unit as professional rather than personal. Administrators at HBCUs and HSIs were more likely to treat students and colleagues as family members. In terms of rewards, all practitioners valued the meaning of their work. Where practitioners at research universities and comprehensive institutions spoke more in terms of serving student, those at liberal arts colleges, religiously affiliated institutions, community colleges, HBCUs, and HSIs referred to the reward of seeing students grow and were particularly interested in seeing underrepresented groups succeed. Across the board, salary and benefits were important to practitioners, but a common understanding of the limitations regarding pay was evident. Ultimately, Hirt (2006) found that professional practice did not transcend institutional type, supporting her hypothesis that institutional type impacts practice and, consequently, the institution where mid-level administrators practice may impact their work life.

Summary

This review of research regarding mid-level administrators reveals the importance of this population in student affairs organizations. The size and diversity of this population has challenged researchers who were attempting to study this group, revealing a need to identify a systematic way to segment the population to aid in research. Several studies examining morale and satisfaction were reviewed to provide insight into work life issues that are important to mid-level administrators. Although several studies have served to increase understanding of mid-level administrator morale and satisfaction, this review has identified a gap in the literature regarding mid-level administrators and workplace motivation.

Motivation in the Workplace

Low-performing mid-level administrators can produce ripple effects up and down the organizational structure, impacting the work of those to whom they report and those whom they supervise. Consequently, it is important to consider the motivational factors that influence mid-level administrators to excel in their performance. An examination of work place motivation forms the basis for this discussion.

Over the course of one's life, one may spend over five decades participating in the workforce. For most people in developed or developing countries, a significant portion of the day is spent in the work environment. The impact of time spent at work contributes to a person's security and identity and can significantly affect physical and psychological well-being (Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008). Past and current research on work motivation has uncovered issues surrounding "how, why, and when individuals engage and invest attention, energy, time and other personal resources in their work" (p. 3).

The field of work motivation continues to achieve substantial scientific progress. Research on work motivation serves to enhance organizational productivity and to improve the effectiveness of an organization's management of human capital by promoting performance, adjustment, and growth. One noticeable shift in the work motivation literature has been from the performance-centric view, which dominated the 20th century and focused solely on organizational effectiveness, to the current person-centric view, which focuses more on the individual employee and how work and personal demands affect job performance. Although productivity and job performance are still the desired outcomes, recent studies in work motivation based in personality and social psychology have led researchers to investigate employee attitudes, such as satisfaction, work commitment, and job involvement. The following subsections

provide an overview and definition of workplace motivation and review foundational theories of motivation, with particular attention to Vroom's expectancy-valence theory of motivation.

Defining Workplace Motivation

At the most basic level, there are two major factors (which have the potential to be influenced by supervisors) that can determine employee performance in the workplace: the level of ability of the employees and the amount of effort that these employees expend in doing their work. Vroom (1964) referred to the former as a nonmotivational attribute and the latter as a motivational attribute. Vroom identified a person's "ability" to perform a task is based on what the person "can do" not what the "does do." He posited that a worker's "ability" to perform a task was based on the degree to which he possessed the necessary *nonmotivational attributes* for attaining a high level of task performance. For example, two individuals are asked to complete a task that involves reconciling a fiscal account; however, only one of the employees has been trained in the skills needed to complete this task. Although both may be highly motivated to complete the task, only one has the ability, gained through training and experience, to do so.

Vroom (1964) contended that a "worker's level of performance on his job is dependent both on his ability and on his motivation" (p. 198). He posited that the effects of motivation on performance are dependent on the level of ability of the employee and that the relationship of ability to performance is dependent on the motivation of the worker. Thus, the effects of ability and motivation on performance are not additive but interactive.

The second factor identified to affect employee performance is *motivation*. Motivation is an important factor in job performance and human productivity (Pinder,

2008). Pinder's definition of motivation related to the workplace was used in this study: "Work motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (p. 11). In essence, Pinder (2008) proposed that there is a multiplicity of needs, drives, instincts, and external factors possessed by a person that causes that person to exert an amount of effort to influence a work-related behavior. These needs, drives, instincts, and external factors can be weak or strong and can vary between individuals and within an individual at any given time. For example, a strong force would be an employee perceiving the possibility of losing the job as a result of downsizing. As a result, the employee may be strongly motivated to exert a high degree of effort towards job-related functions, resulting in high performance. In a different economic climate where the company is not facing downsizing (weak force), the same employee may not exert the same amount of effort toward job-related functions.

In Pinder's (2008) definition he proposed that the energetic forces that initiate work-related behavior also serve to determine the form, direction, intensity, and duration of the behavior. Pritchard and Ashwood (2008) recognized *direction* as related to which action the employee will engage, *intensity* as related to how hard the employee will work, and *duration* related to how long the employee will sustain effort toward the task.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The source of energetic forces in Pinder's (2008) definition can originate from within the individual (intrinsic) or external to the individual (extrinsic). *Intrinsic motivation* is believed to be the natural tendency to be moved to engage in an activity based on the mere satisfaction, challenge, or curiosity entailed. Ryan and Deci (2000) postulated that intrinsic motivation lies in the nexus between the individual and the task. People can be motivated by a task that they find particularly interesting or by the

satisfaction that they derive from engaging in the task. Intrinsic motivation is said to be based on the human need for competence and self-determination. In addition, the individual must feel that the intrinsically motivated behavior is free from pressures and rewards by outside forces (Pinder, 2008).

Conversely, *extrinsic motivation* is reflected by the engagement of the person in an activity based on the result of obtaining an external outcome (such as a reward) or not obtaining an outcome (such as a punishment). Interest in the activity is not based on mere challenge or curiosity; the motives for engaging are based on the outcomes obtained as a result of the engagement. Using the example given earlier, the woman who makes a decision to exert extra effort toward completing her job-related functions is motivated to do so by the threat of losing her job. The threat of losing her job is an extrinsic outcome (negative) that is administered by her supervisor (an external source). Thus, she is extrinsically motivated to exert extra effort at work to avoid the extrinsic outcome of losing her job.

Motivational Theories

The study of human motivation is built on theories based on a set of assumptions about human nature and the determinants that give impetus to action. In their research on how humans change and develop, Walter and Marks (1981) offered a typology that summarized the models of human nature that have been developed and studied over time. Included in this typology were fulfillment models, consistency models, cognitive-perceptual models, learning models, and the contextual model. Pinder (2008) condensed these models based on a fundamental set of assumptions about the nature of human beings. Pinder found the fulfillment model, learning model, and cognitive-perceptual model to be the most dominant models of human functioning underlying the theories of

work motivation. Pinder's classification of these models sets a framework for organizing various theories of work motivation.

Fulfillment models. Fulfillment models are based on the belief that people are continually unfolding and developing their innate potentialities. In fulfillment models one fundamental force resides within the individual (Maddi, 1989). Maddi proposed two variations of the fulfillment model: the "perfection version" and the "actualization version." In the "perfection version" the fundamental force is the tendency to strive toward that which will make life complete. This is achieved through compensation for one's individual functional or genetic weaknesses. In the "actualization version" of the fulfillment model the force is the tendency to express more and more fully the capabilities or potentialities of one's genetic constitution. Maslow's theory of needs is an "actualization version" of the fulfillment model (Maddi, 1989).

Underlying most motivation theories is the assumption that people are always in need of something and that these needs give rise to behavior that will attempt to address the needs (Pinder, 1984). Maslow (1943) examined the relationship between needs and behavior, resulting in a hierarchical theory that stresses the innate tendency to move toward higher levels of growth and fulfillment. The lower level of the hierarchy is composed of physiological and safety needs (food, shelter, rest) that serve to sustain life and free the person from threat of emotional and physical harm (safety, financial security, health care). Maslow contended that these primary needs must be fulfilled to bring about equilibrium. Failure to fulfill these needs prompts behavior to correct the situation. As lower level needs are met, new needs emerge. The lower-level needs must be met in order to activate higher-order needs, categorized as love/social, esteem, and self-actualization. Love/social needs are related to a person's desire for connectedness and interaction with others. Esteem needs are grouped into two sets: internally and

externally motivating needs. Internally motivating esteem needs include self-esteem, accomplishment, and self-respect; external esteem needs include reputation and recognition, self-confidence, capability, and worth. As long as individuals are motivated to satisfy these needs, they are moving toward growth, toward self-actualization. Self-actualization is the need to fulfill one's potential, to become what one is capable of becoming. Seeking fulfillment of the higher-level needs is seen to have the greatest influence on intrinsically motivated work-related behavior. Understanding the assumptions related to motivation and needs fulfillment assists in understanding work behavior.

Learning models. Learning models are basically predicated on the notion that, based on personal experience, people are more likely to engage in behaviors that are rewarding and less likely to engage in activities that they have found to be aversive. In other words, behavior is a function of consequences. Goal-directed theories surfaced from this model of human functioning. The widely recognized goal-setting theory emerged from research by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham in the early 20th century (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). At its core, this theory contends that the intention to achieve a goal is the primary motivating force for behavior. Locke and Latham (1990) identified four mechanisms to explain how goals affect behavior. First, goals affect choice by allowing the person to focus on immediate tasks. Second, goals help to define the tasks toward which a person should take action, thus eliminating action on unnecessary activities. Third, once a goal has been established, there is less temptation to quit and greater persistence to achieve the goal. Fourth, motivation and performance increase due to development of specific strategies to perform the task.

Locke and Latham (1990) identified three generalizations from goal theory. First, if accepted by the individual, more difficult goals will result in higher levels of

performance than easy goals; harder goals lead to more effort and persistence than easy goals. Second, goals that are specific in nature will produce higher levels of performance than vague goals or the absence of goals. Vague goals do not provide measurable indicators of effective performance. Measurable, specific goals provide clarity to gauge performance level. The third generalization pertains to the origin of the goal. Goals can be set by the individual, assigned by another party, or set jointly. Through a series of studies, Locke and Latham (1990) found that the key to effective motivation hinged on whether the goals were embraced by the individual, regardless of the origin of the goal. They concluded that the motivational effects of assigned goals were just as powerful as the effects of jointly or individually set goals.

Cognitive-perceptual models. Cognitive-perceptual models see human beings as information-processing systems. In these models, human behavior is based on the *interpretation* of events in the environment, not on the strict, objective nature of the events themselves (Pinder, 2008). Said differently, human action is caused by the way in which reality is perceived and understood by the individual. For example, two employees are given the opportunity to work on an extra project. One employee sees this opportunity as a way to grow professionally and immediately takes on the challenge. The other employee perceives that the amount of time needed to work on this project would take away from the time that he would prefer to spend with his family and thus declines the opportunity.

Valence-instrumentality-expectancy (VIE) theories of work motivation are the most popular, useful, and robust bodies of thinking about work motivation posited over the past century (Pinder, 2008). In his description of VIE theory, Pinder stated three core underpinnings of the theory: (a) the expectations that people hold about being able to perform well at their work, (b) perceptions of whether certain effort will enable them

to be successful at their work, and (c) perceptions of whether, if they are successful, their high performance will result in desirable outcomes. Most VIE theories are founded on the works of Victor Vroom presented in his landmark book (1964) on work motivation.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) draws attention to several principles and concepts that affect work motivation. The theory is based on two principles. First, people make conscious choices about their behavior in organizations using thought, reason, and anticipation of future events. Ultimately, the purpose of these choices is based on the hedonistic doctrine of increasing pleasure and decreasing pain (Pinder, 1984). When faced with a variety of alternatives, an individual will select a course of action which he or she believes will maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Second, an individual's values and attitudes interact with environmental components, such as role expectations and organizational culture, to influence behavior. When applied to work motivation, this principle implies that employees will perform at a level that they believe will maximize their overall best interest (Pinder, 1984). Vroom's theory is composed of three key concepts: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy; these interact to produce a motivational force impacting individual performance.

Valence. Beginning with the assumption that at any point in time a person has preferences among outcomes, *valence* is the perceived attractiveness of a particular outcome. An outcome is positively valent when the person prefers having the reward as opposed to not having it. For example, if an employee prefers receiving a promotion as opposed to not receiving it, then the promotion would be seen as positively valent. Conversely, an outcome can be negatively valent if the person would prefer not to have it. Demotions, layoffs, and work-related stress are typically viewed by the employee as negatively valent in that the employee would prefer not to receive them. Finally, a

person can be indifferent to the reward; such rewards are said to have zero valence. For example, a person is given the opportunity to complete a survey, with the reward of receiving two free golf memberships. The person does not play golf and does not know anyone who plays golf, so makes the decision not to take the survey. The golf membership (outcome) has zero valence because the person is uninterested in obtaining the golf membership and thus takes no action to try to obtain the golf membership.

Vroom (1964) noted the importance of distinguishing between the *valence* of an outcome and the *value* of an outcome to an individual. Pinder (1984) described valence as “the expected levels of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction brought by work-related outcomes” (p. 135). Whereas valence is the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome, value is the satisfaction derived after the outcome has been received. For example, an employee may work hard in anticipation that the effort expended will eventually lead to a promotion (outcome). The promotion is seen by the employee as positively valent. However, once the promotion is received, the employee may find that he or she is not satisfied with the new role that resulted from the promotion and would have preferred to have stayed in the former position. Thus, the value of the reward is not seen by the employee as positive.

Instrumentality. *Instrumentality* is the belief linking one outcome to another outcome. Vroom (1964) described instrumentality as the connection between performance (first-level outcome) on the job and outcomes that result from the performance (second-level outcomes). For example, if an employee believes that a high level of performance will lead to a desired promotion (positively valent outcome), then the employee is more motivated to exert the force necessary to achieve a high level of performance. Thus, the outcome (high performance) is instrumental in receiving the second-level outcome (promotion). Instrumentality can take values ranging from -1 to

+1. If the attainment of the second-level outcome is a certain result of the first-level outcome, the instrumentality is valued at +1. For example, commission pay incentives based on performance are built on this notion. An employee sees high performance (first-level outcome) as instrumental to receiving the monetary reward (second-level outcome). If the person perceives no linkage between the first-level outcome and the second-level outcome, the instrumentality is valued at 0. For example, if an employee believes that the criteria for receiving the promotion are based on factors unrelated to performance (favoritism, nepotism, etc.), the employee would perceive the linkage between high performance (first-level outcome) and obtaining the promotion (second-level outcome) as zero. If the attainment of the secondary outcome is certain without the attainment of the first outcome and is impossible with that attainment, then instrumentality is valued at -1. An employee who has been threatened with dismissal for being absent from the job may be told that being absent (first-level outcome) is negatively instrumental for continued employment (second-level outcome) or, alternatively, that further absenteeism will be positively instrumental for termination.

In the context of work motivation, instrumentality serves as the connection between performance and valence. If an employee anticipates that high performance will be rewarded with desired outcomes, the employee will place a high valence on high performance and, consequently, strive for high performance. Alternatively, if an employee perceives that high performance will result in outcomes that he or she dislikes or for which he or she has no preference, then high performance will not be positively valent and thus, the employee is less likely to strive for high performance. Pinder (2008) commented, "If management wants high performance levels, it must tie positively valent outcomes to high performance and be sure that employees understand the connection" (p. 367).

Expectancy. Vroom suggested that, when an employee is choosing between alternatives that involve uncertain outcomes, the behavior will be affected not only by the preferences between the outcomes but also by belief in the probability of attaining the outcomes. The belief that a particular outcome is attainable is referred to as *expectancy*. Expectancy is the strength of a person's belief about the degree to which a particular first-level outcome is the result of his or her actions (Pinder, 2008). In an example in which high performance is the first-level outcome, expectancy is the belief by the employee that his or her effort will result in high performance. If an employee believes that an outcome is achievable, then the employee will be more motivated to try to achieve it. Thus, if the employee believes that effort will lead to high performance, the employee is more likely to exert the necessary effort (given that the employee believes that high performance will result in a positively valent secondary outcome).

Expectancy differs from instrumentality in that it is an action-outcome association, as opposed to an outcome-outcome association. Vroom (1964) suggested that expectancy ranges in value from zero to 1. If an employee perceives that action on his or her part will not be followed by an outcome, then expectancy is measured as zero. Alternatively, if an employee believes that action on his or her part will yield the desired outcome, then expectancy is valued at 1. In relation to work motivation, an employee is placed on the expectancy continuum between "I can't do it" (measured as zero) to "there is no doubt that I can do this!" (measured as 1; Pinder, 2008).

Vroom (1964) proposed that a person's belief about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence interact psychologically to produce a motivational force that causes the person to perform in ways that maximize pleasure and minimize pain. A person will be motivated to expend the required amount of effort to be high performing when the following is true: The employee values a particular outcome as positively *valent*, the

employee believes that high performance is *instrumental* in attaining this outcome, and the employee recognizes that a certain amount of effort must be expended to be high performing (*expectancy*). For example, a mid-level student affairs professional wants to elevate the status of his department in the eyes of the CSAO. First, the mid-level administrator considers the recognition given by the CSAO as a desired outcome (*valence*). Next, he believes that, by working harder and exerting more effort toward work-related tasks, he will bring his department to function at a higher level (*expectancy*). Finally, he believes that a high-functioning department will gain the recognition of the CSAO (*instrumentality*). Hence, the mid-level administrator will be motivated to perform to achieve this outcome.

Employers who want to motivate employees toward high performance must understand the value employees place on a particular outcome, demonstrate that there is linkage between high performance and that outcome, and reward high performance with the outcome. For example, a CSAO may use merit raises as a way to reward high-performing staff members. However, unless staff members realize and/or believe that merit pay is being distributed in accordance with high performance, they may not alter their performance.

The Role of Job Satisfaction

While often used interchangeably, *motivation* and *satisfaction* have been defined by researchers as separate and distinct constructs. Vroom (1964) recognized this distinction and proposed that motivation, rather than satisfaction, has a significant effect on job performance. However, previous studies have focused on factors that lead to employee satisfaction as a way to improve job performance and minimize intentions to leave. These studies have shed light on important issues affecting employee satisfaction and morale that may have an impact on performance. Results from these studies have

noted several factors affecting mid-level administrators' job satisfaction, including opportunities for growth, development, and internal promotions (Johnsrud, Sagaria, & Heck, 1992). Understanding the work role variables that affect job satisfaction can provide insight for supervisors who want to satisfy the needs of employees; however, job satisfaction does not necessarily translate into high job performance. For example, an employee can be satisfied with his salary, his colleagues, and his position within the organization but still not be motivated to perform highly.

In relating job satisfaction to the concept of valence, Vroom (1964) contended that job satisfaction is the conceptual equivalent of valence of the job or work role to the employee performing it. There is one noticeable difference between valence and satisfaction. As opposed to satisfaction, which can pertain only to a received reward, valence is the *value* of the perceived or received award. For example, the desire for a promotion can be seen as positively valent, but satisfaction from a promotion can be attained only once the promotion is received. Porter and Lawler (1968) added to Vroom's research by focusing on this relationship. As opposed to the common assumption that job satisfaction is positively associated with performance, they concluded that job performance *causes* job satisfaction. Porter and Lawler suggested that the rewards received from performance result in job satisfaction.

To influence job satisfaction, performance must result in rewards. Porter and Lawler (1968) distinguished between two kinds of rewards: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic rewards are defined as those that are organizationally controlled, such as pay, promotion, status, and security. The researchers referred to these extrinsic rewards as satisfying the lower-level physiological and security needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Intrinsic rewards were defined as those that are controlled and administered by the individuals themselves, such as positive feelings of accomplishment. Intrinsic rewards

are seen as satisfying the higher-level needs of self-actualization or higher-order growth needs in Maslow's hierarchy. The type of reward also has an impact on satisfaction. Intrinsic rewards that satisfy higher-order needs such as self-actualization are more likely to be related to job performance than are extrinsic rewards satisfying lower-level needs. The immediate satisfaction of intrinsic rewards (given by the individual and most often based on the performance itself) causes a closer connection with job performance than do extrinsic rewards (which are usually delayed due to being administered externally, usually by a supervisor or peer).

Porter and Lawler (1968) suggested that job performance impacts satisfaction, but the impact of satisfaction on performance remains unclear. Vroom (1964) posited that a person experiences job satisfaction to the extent that the job provides what the person desires. In addition, an employee performs effectively in the job to the extent that the performance leads to the attainment of desired goals or rewards. Therefore, an employee will exert effort to achieve levels of performance that will result in desired outcomes. Satisfaction is the value that the individual places on the obtained outcome. Whereas level of performance is a function of the valence of effective performance, level of job satisfaction is a function of the valence of the job itself (Vroom, 1964).

Foldesi, Smith, and Toller (2002) identified generous benefits and a high degree of job security as two commonly cited reasons employees choose to work in colleges and universities. Although the level of job satisfaction is relatively high among student affairs professionals, the self-perceived impact of satisfaction on job performance has been reported as having minimal to no impact (Bender, 2009). Thus, what motivates mid-level student affairs administrators to perform in their jobs on campus is unclear. In addition, previous research has not investigated whether motivation levels are impacted by length of time in the profession. Looking at valence-expectancy theory within career

stages is an appropriate framework for investigating motivation of mid-level administrators at various career stages.

Career Stage Theory

One of the challenges with studying mid-level administrators as a group is the lack of clearly defined boundaries to define the population. A student affairs professional may spend several years, decades, or the remainder of a career in a mid-level position. Belch and Strange (1995) found that how participants viewed middle management in student affairs varied based on the particular phase of their career. In the present study, segmenting mid-level administrators by career stage may prove illuminating and useful in identifying motivational determinants that influence performance.

Career stage theories assume that people progress through a series of stages during their careers (Super & Super, 1957) and that each career stage is marked by needs, work attitudes, and behaviors unique to that stage (Mount, 1984). Career stage models presume that people change as they advance in age and accrue experiences in their work and nonwork lives (Adler & Aranya, 1984). The relationship of career stage to work behaviors and attitudes of employees has been a frequent topic of research in the study of vocational behavior (Mount, 1984).

Several studies have examined differences in work attitudes over various career stages. Gould and Hawkins (1978) investigated the moderating effect of career stage on the job satisfaction-performance relationship among 132 employees of a public agency. The results indicated that career stage was an important moderating variable in the relationship between performance and multiple dimensions of satisfaction. Gould and Hawkins identified the need to “investigate changing attitudes, needs, relationships and involvements which individuals develop and discard as their careers unfold” (p. 448).

In a study focused on the relationship between performance and facets of job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and role conflict among 102 full-time faculty members across three career stages, Stumpf and Rabinowitz (1981) discovered a relationship between career stage and organizationally relevant variables such as job satisfaction and performance. Later career stages were associated with greater satisfaction with work and greater role conflict. They cautioned that failure to consider performance-satisfaction relationships within each career stage is likely to overestimate the strength of the relationship for one career stage and underestimate it for another career stage.

Mount (1984) studied the relationship between a three-stage model of careers and facets of managers' job satisfaction. Mount surveyed 483 managers regarding the length of time in their occupation and their satisfaction with various components of their work. Findings indicated career stage as a moderator in managers' satisfaction with all facets of work. Contrary to the results reported by Stumpf and Rabinowitz (1981), Mount (1984) found managers in the earliest career stage, the establishment stage, were more satisfied with most aspects of their job than were managers in the other two career stages. Mount attributed the conflicting results to the differences in populations studied, stating that attitudes, beliefs, values, and needs differ according to vocational interests. Mount (1984) also found that differences in operational definitions of career stages across studies made it difficult to compare results with similar studies.

Adler and Aranya (1984) studied male accounting professionals at various career stages with respect to their work needs, attitudes, and vocational preferences. Findings indicated that professionals within a single field but at different career stages differed significantly in needs, attitudes, and preferences. The researchers found that professionals over the age of 60 indicated lower levels of higher-order needs and job satisfaction but stronger security needs and professional commitment than those at

earlier career stages. Adler and Aranya stressed the importance of career stage research, “the discovery of stable career stage differences within a single profession has important implications for the organizations that must motivate, satisfy, and retain these professionals” (p. 55).

Career stages have an important moderating effect on individual work attitudes and behavior. However, career stage research is plagued by inconsistency regarding the operational definition of career stages (Mount, 1984). The most difficult problem is agreeing on a common measurement to identify each career stage. Various measures have been used to define career stage, including age, tenure in the organization, and tenure in the profession.

Age

In Mount’s (1984) review of the literature, he found that the most common adult developmental approach used in the creation of models of career development was Levinson, Darrow, Klien, Levinson, and McKee’s (1978) model of life development. The main tenet of this model is that, no matter what background or occupation, people grow through specific life stages, based on chronological age, during which certain activities and adjustments must be accomplished. People pass through the life stages progressively in a firm, well-ordered sequence.

Although the model presented by Levinson et al. (1978) has influenced extensive research on job attitudes and behaviors as influenced and moderated by age, researchers are divided on the usefulness of the model and age as a criterion to define career stage. Morrow and McElroy (1987) used age, organizational tenure, and positional tenure to define career stage. Results indicated that different patterns of work commitment and job satisfaction emerged depending on whether age, organizational tenure, or positional tenure was used as an operationalization of career stage. Age was found to explain

greater amounts of variance in the dependent variables than did organizational or positional tenure.

Allen and Meyer (1993) examined organizational commitment in relation to three operationalizations of career stage: age, organizational tenure, and positional tenure. Consistent with findings by Morrow and McElroy (1987), Allen and Meyer found age to be more strongly linked with affective and normative commitment than was positional tenure or organizational tenure.

Alternatively, Rush, Peacock, and Milkovich (1980) found that people did not show a time-linked orderly progression through stages by age, as proposed by Levinson et al. (1978). Instead, Rush et al. (1980) proposed that the time-link progression through career stages would be more appropriately related to a “career clock,” allowing for variances in beginning points based on individual backgrounds and experiences. For example, a high school graduate proceeding directly into a trade occupation may initiate the first career stage at an earlier age and move through it more quickly than someone who continues studying through postdoctoral work, entering the first career stage at a much later age. Looking at faculty in the middle of their academic careers, Baldwin, Lunceford, and Vanderlinden (2005) used age, number of years teaching in higher education institutions (career tenure), and number of years at their current job, including promotions in rank (organizational tenure) as criteria for categorizing faculty into career and life stages. Baldwin et al. (2005) found that shifts in faculty work patterns at mid-life were consistent with the Levinson et al. (1978) model of the adult years. Faculty work hard during their early and middle years to demonstrate professional competence and gain tenure; as tenure is accomplished, they seek new ways to infuse variety into their work roles. Using satisfaction as a measure, Baldwin et al. (2005) found that faculty in the early midlife stage reported more dissatisfaction than their colleagues at

other life stages. A decreased level of dissatisfaction after early midlife is consistent with the Levinson et al. (1978) model that posits that a period of stability begins after the turbulent years of midlife.

Organizational Tenure

The mobility of the modern day worker complicates using organizational tenure (i.e., years in the organization) as a criterion to define career stage. Earlier models, proposed over a quarter of a century ago, were built mainly on the linear careers of males. Historically, careers were thought to evolve in a linear fashion within one or two organizations. In a review of the changing nature of careers, Sullivan (1999) stated that “the way we view careers has dramatically changed” (p. 457). Downsizing and organizational restructuring have led to increased job responsibilities and diminished job security. Whereas workers traditionally traded organizational loyalty for job security, workers now exchange performance for increased learning opportunities and marketability. Decreased organizational loyalty has resulted in an increase in worker mobility between organizations. Sagaria and Johnsrud (1988) found that position change was the primary means of career advancement for administrators in higher education. Sullivan (1999) found that career models based on progressive career and life cycles (and chronological age) may not accurately capture the careers of the modern worker.

Sullivan also found that the Levinson et al. (1978) model did not adequately capture the complex lives of women. Sullivan suggested that typical models of organizational success stressed the importance of reaching a certain level by a certain age and did not accurately reflect the career patterns of women who are more likely to stop out or slow down career progression due to life commitments.

Professional Tenure

Another criterion used to operationalize career stages is years in the profession, referred to as *professional tenure*. Based on Super and Super's (1957) work/career cycle model, researchers (e.g., Gould & Hawkins, 1978; Lynn, Thi Cao, & Horn, 1996; Morrow & McElroy, 1987; Mount, 1984; Slocum & Cron, 1985; Stumpf & Rabinowitz, 1981) have suggested that managerial and professional careers can be described by three stages that are measured using professional tenure: establishment, advancement, and maintenance. The *establishment* stage is defined as less than or equal to 2 years, the *advancement* stage is defined as greater than 2 years and less than or equal to 10 years, and the *maintenance* stage is defined as professional tenure greater than 10 years. The establishment stage (0 to 2 years) is characterized by a need to exhibit professional competency, acquiring the necessary skills for maneuvering in the work environment and gaining acceptance by peers and colleagues (Hall & Nougaim, 1968). Employees at this stage are usually low on the pay scale. The work itself, in addition to pay, is the most salient need (Gould & Hawkins, 1978). As professional competency is achieved, the employee turns to mastering the organization in the advancement stage (2 to 10 years). Importance is placed on formation of structure and career security. During this stage, the employee desires professional success and often seeks promotion or other forms of professional advancement (Hall & Nougaim, 1968). Gould and Hawkins (1978) proposed that high performers in this stage are more concerned with promotion and show less concern about pay and the work itself. The maintenance stage (10 or more years) is marked by the employee's concern for retaining the present position, status, and performance levels (Cron, Dubinsky, & Michaels, 1988). Desire for professional advancement and development opportunities begins to diminish. Hall and Nougaim (1968) suggested that employees in this stage who perceive themselves as

successful focus on mentoring new professionals and seek to enhance the organization over their own professional development, while those who perceive themselves as unsuccessful may seek to block the progress of and “punish” younger professionals. Employees at this phase may also experience the onset of career plateaus (Hall & Nougaim, 1968).

For this study, professional tenure was used rather than age or years in the organization. Using professional tenure as opposed to age allowed the researcher to account for atypical career patterns and the possibility that administrators could be at any career stage at any chronological point in their lives (Lynn et al., 1996). In addition, using professional tenure as an operational measure for career stage, as opposed to organizational tenure, allows for appropriate study of student affairs professionals who often reference their career progression from the time they entered the profession. In addition, inter-institutional moves are seen as an opportunity for advancement in the student affairs profession (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988), so using professional tenure accounts for transfer of rank and professional tenure status to other organizations (Stumpf & Rabinowitz, 1981).

Positional Tenure

Previous student affairs research has identified quasi career stages for student affairs professionals: new professionals, mid-level professionals, and senior student affairs officers. These categories have presented several difficulties when attempting to study these populations. One problem is that they lack common units of measurement. New professionals as a population are defined by time in the profession. In her research on new professionals in student affairs, Waple (2006) defined *new professionals* as those who had entered the profession within the previous 5 years. Senior student affairs officers, the pinnacle group, were defined by the positions that they held. Similarly,

mid-level professionals were defined by their structural position in the organization. Mid-level leaders may encompass any administrator who holds a mid-level position but not a senior student affairs level position; thus, population, age, experience and tenure can vary greatly among mid-level administrators.

Belch and Strange (1995) examined the meaning and importance of middle management and career to a group of mid-level student affairs administrators. They discovered that “middle management itself is best understood in terms of several distinct phases, each marked by differences of tenure in a position and career orientation” (p. 215). They identified three phases of mid-level managers: early, middle, and late. Mid-level managers in the early phase represent those with fewer than 5 years of middle management experience, those in the middle phase have 5 to 8 of experience, and those in the late phase have more than 8 years of experience. Based on how respondents defined their individual career aspirations and advancement, Belch and Strange suggested two career orientations that described middle managers: transitory and professional. Transitory middle managers view mid-level management as a temporary step on an upward mobility path to another mid-level position or a senior management position. Professional middle managers are those whose goals and aspirations are satisfied at the mid-level manager position and who have made a conscious decision, based on personal or professional factors, to remain at the mid-level position.

In their study of student affairs mid-level administrators, Chernow, Cooper, and Winston (2003) identified two levels of student affairs middle manager, based on administrative distance on the organizational hierarchy. The higher level consisted of associate vice presidents and others who supervised numerous areas. The lower level included program directors and coordinators. Young (2007) contended that lack of a common definition of mid-level management presents problems when attempting to

understand this unique population. The need for a common definition and parameters to study this unique population still exists. Career stage was used in this study to divide this grouping of mid-level student affairs professionals to determine whether career stage impacts components of motivation: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy.

Summary

This chapter serves as a review of the literature pertaining to about mid-level administrators, challenges in defining the population, and issues that affect their work life. The chapter provided an overview of the concept of work motivation, with particular attention to Vroom's expectancy theory. Several studies have examined student affairs mid-level administrators' morale and job satisfaction; however, few studies have attempted to understand the determinants that motivate these administrators to perform their work. Attempts to study this population of student affairs administrators have proved challenging due to the diversity of the population. Career stage theory was identified as the appropriate framework for studying this population.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the factors affecting work motivation of mid-level student affairs administrators at various career stages. Specifically, the study focused on administrators' perceptions of outcomes that influence their motivation levels, the rewards received for high job performance, and the influence of career stage. In efforts to obtain a comprehensive picture of mid-level administrators, to understand their experiences, and to examine the interrelationship of motivation levels, behaviors, and career stage, a qualitative inquiry approach was the selected research method.

This chapter begins with an overview of qualitative research, followed by a description of the research design, selection of the case study site, selection and description of the research participants, information about the data collection methods, strategies used for ensuring trustworthiness, and a description of the data analysis techniques.

Qualitative Research

When examining the human experience, many researchers have gravitated toward a form of qualitative, naturalistic inquiry grounded in a paradigm of constructivism (Mertens, 2005). Researchers using naturalistic inquiry rooted in a constructivist paradigm are committed to studying things in their natural settings based on the belief that reality is socially constructed. They attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. Through the identification and verification of shared constructs, the researcher then contributes to the expansion of knowledge. Rising from the philosophical roots of phenomenology,

qualitative research is an activity that locates the researcher in the world of the subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Merriam (1998) identified several characteristics that typify qualitative research. First, the research is an attempt to understand the phenomenon of interest from an “emic,” or insider’s perspective. The perspective of the participant is what is important to the researcher. Second, unlike surveys and questionnaires used in quantitative research, the qualitative researcher is the instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Using the researcher as the instrument allows for flexibility, responsiveness, and contextual understanding. Third, the researcher determines the environment. Many qualitative studies are conducted in the participant’s natural environment to observe behavior in a natural setting. Fourth, qualitative research is based on an inductive research strategy. Unlike the quantitative approach, where the researcher is testing a predetermined theory or hypothesis, qualitative research builds on abstractions and concepts to construct hypotheses or theories. The hypothesis in a qualitative study is fluid, ever changing with the discoveries of the researcher. Finally, the product of qualitative study is richly descriptive. By using the participants’ own words, artifacts, and images, the researcher is able to provide readers a deeper, contextual understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Research Design

Within the overarching term of qualitative research lie several variations, often referred to as methodological approaches, traditions (Patton, 2002), or strategies of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) that assist in connecting the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical data. Each methodological approach has associated skills, assumptions, and practices that guide the researcher throughout the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Examples of qualitative methodological approaches

include, but are not limited to, the case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and life history. Several qualitative approaches can be used to examine the factors that promote and sustain the success of mid-career student affairs professionals. A case study approach was selected as the method to capture data that will provide a thick description of a mid-level student affairs practitioner's experience. Multiple case studies were constructed and compared to understand the experiences of mid-level administrators.

Case studies as a methodological approach are used when the researcher is interested in studying a single entity: the case. The case can be a single person, a program, or a group of individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Merriam (1998) made clear that an essential element in choosing the case study as a methodological approach is the ability to identify the boundaries of the case. The researcher should be able to "fence in" what he or she wishes to study. If the phenomenon being studied lacks boundaries, it is not a case. Stake (2005) identified the case study as both an inquiry process and a product of that inquiry. The process includes the way in which the researcher collects, organizes, and analyzes data and the product is the collection and presentation of the results. Stake contended that the more the object of study is "a specific, unique, bounded system," the easier it is to apply the epistemological underpinnings of the method. Case studies can be further defined by particular features that characterize them as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are particularistic based on the ability to use them as a means to focus on a particular incident, event, program, or phenomenon. The case study is important for what it reveals about the particular incident or phenomenon. The descriptive nature means that the end product of the study is a rich and robust description of the phenomenon being studied. Anthropologists frequently use the term *thick description* to

describe the full, complete, literal description of the phenomenon being investigated. The heuristic nature of case studies implies an active role for the reader, in which the reader leaves with a greater understanding of the phenomenon under study. Researchers can “bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).

Examples of case studies can be found in abundance in student affairs research. Smith and Rodgers (2005) employed a case study methodological approach in exploring how a particular campus’s division of student affairs understood and utilized The *Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1994, as cited in Smith & Rodgers, 2005), the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA and NASPA, 1996, as cited in Smith & Rodgers, 2005), and *Good Practice in Student Affairs* (Blimling & Whitt, 1999) to guide their practice. At the center of the present study were student affairs administrators who shared the experience of being mid-level administrators at their institution.

Selection of the Sample

A single-institution case study was deemed appropriate to explore the phenomenon of motivation among mid-level student affairs administrators. Choosing one institution and examining its unique mission, culture, and staff dynamic is a feasible and, at minimum for the selected institution, potentially rewarding research strategy. Although a weakness of the single-institution case study is the limited generalizability of the results, the goal of a case study is particularization, not generalization (Merriam, 1998). The single-institution case study design allows for clear parameters of the population being researched and allows the researcher to explore concepts in a well-defined setting. In addition, the impact of the workplace environment on motivation is

well recognized (Kanfer et al., 2008); thus, reducing the variation by focusing on a single institution is valuable when looking at a group of mid-level administrators.

Merriam (1998) asserted that, once a research problem has been identified, the selection of the sample follows. Due to the multitude of available sites, people to be interviewed, and documents to be read, the researcher must consider where, when, and whom to observe.

The Case Study Site

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) suggested that “the selection of a suitable site is a critical decision in naturalistic research. . . . Site selection affects the viability of the whole study and great attention should be given to this process” (p. 53). To identify a site that maximized the opportunity to engage the identified problem, several considerations helped to determine the feasibility of potential case study sites. Examples of the criterion considered were entry to the site, size of the institution, size of the division of student affairs, organizational structure of the division of student affairs, high probability of mid-level administrators present in the organization, and location of the institution. During the initial stage of the study the researcher obtained information on various institutions that met these criteria. A short list of institutions suitable for the planned study was compiled. After reviewing the list of five institutions that met the selection criteria, two factors drove the final selection: (a) the probability of a large number of mid-level administrators in the division of student affairs, and (b) access to the institution in terms of proximal location. After consultation with the dissertation chair, a site was selected.

The researcher contacted the Vice President for Student Affairs at the potential institution to obtain permission to proceed with the study. Permission was granted and an administrative review of the study proposal and approved Institutional Review Board

(IRB) paperwork was submitted to and approved by the selected site's IRB Office (Appendix A).

The selected site was a large, public institution that offers some master's and doctoral degrees but with the primary focus on undergraduate education. The size of the division of student affairs at the institution mirrors the large number of students attending the university. The division is complex and houses over 13 functional areas. The size and complexity of the division presented a large number of mid-level administrators to invite to participate in the study.

Selection and Description of Participants

Purposive sampling was used “to maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). Purposive sampling allows for in-depth study of each information-rich subject. As opposed to quantitative research, where generalizability is the goal, qualitative research seeks context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations (Patton, 2002). Therefore, seeking a representative sample was not critical in this study. In qualitative research, sample sizes are generally small and the participants are purposefully chosen for their ability to provide detailed information on the topic studied. The goal was to identify mid-level student affairs practitioners, at various career stages, who would provide a “thick” understanding of the factors that affect their work motivation. Thus, the following purposeful sampling criteria were applied in the identification of participants: (a) met the definition of a mid-level administrator as defined by the researcher, and (b) tenure as a mid-level administrator.

Various definitions of mid-level student affairs professionals exist in the literature. However, the following definition was used to identify participants: Mid-level student affairs administrators are professionals who do not function as part of the

university's executive leadership but who do, as a part of their primary duties, supervise other professional staff and manage various programs (Penn, 1990). The individual either reports directly to the CSAO or occupies a position that reports to a person who reports directly to the CSAO (Fey, 1991). In larger, highly structured divisions, mid-level administrators may be two or three persons removed from reporting to the CSAO. The mid-level administrator is neither an entry-level professional nor the CSAO (Young, 1990). Administrators who were invited to participate in the current study were asked to self-report that they met the above definition.

In addition to persons at the mid-level status, the researcher sought to identify participants for the study at various stages of their careers. Lynn et al. (1996) suggested that professional or occupational tenure may be an appropriate measure of career stage for professionals. Persons working in a profession are likely to think in terms of a "career clock," basing their tenure on when they entered the profession or current occupation within the profession, rather than their age or organizational tenure, since they can transfer their positional rank and status to other organizations (Rush et al., 1980; Stumpf & Rabinowitz, 1981).

The population of interest in this study was mid-level administrators. The focus was solely on the length of time that the administrator had spent in a mid-level position (positional tenure). Understanding the mobility of student affairs professionals from one institution to another, experience as a mid-level administrator at a previous institution was taken into account when determining positional tenure as a mid-level administrator. Positional tenure was measured by self-report and through document analysis, using a three-stage grouping.

One of the challenges that career stage researchers have faced is inconsistency of metrics used to measure career stage. Career stage has been measured in a variety of

ways, using age, organizational tenure, position tenure, or professional and occupational tenure. Hall and Nougaim (1968) identified a three-stage model to define career stage consisting of the establishment stage, the advancement stage, and the maintenance stage. For the purpose of this study, *establishment stage* was defined as 4 years or less as a mid-level administrator, *advancement stage* was defined as more than 4 years but less than or equal to 10 years as a mid-level administrator, and *maintenance stage* was defined as more than 10 years as a mid-level administrator. Morrow and McElroy (1987) contended that, while the constructs of positional tenure and occupational/professional tenure used by Mount (1984) and Stumpf and Rabinowitz (1981) may not be comparable, they may tend to overlap.

Access to case study site and participants was secured through the Vice President for Student Affairs at the target institution, who identified several administrators within the organization for the researcher to contact. Snowball sampling was used to identify other participants who met the criteria. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to identify potential participants by building on insights and connections with other persons familiar with the population (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

A formal invitation email (Appendix B) containing an overview of the study was sent to 18 student affairs professionals employed at the case study site. A follow-up email identifying the criteria for selection (meeting the mid-level administrator definition and positional tenure) was sent to those who indicated interest. The interview sample was identified from those who agreed to participate and met the sample criteria as outlined in the second email. Although a specific sample size was not set, the goal was to engage at least three participants in each career stage. The purpose of the sample was to maximize new information received (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, redundancy was used as the primary criterion for sample size.

Fourteen administrators responded to the invitation and follow-up email. Review determined that 10 of those administrators met the sampling criteria. Each of those 10 administrators was sent a confirmation email, a request to schedule a face-to-face interview, and a request to submit his or her vita. Thus, 10 participants holding mid-level positions across a variety of functional areas participated in the study. Three of the participants had been a mid-level administrator for less than 4 years, four had been mid-level administrators for 4 to 10 years, and three had more than 10 years experience as a mid-level administrator. Seven participants were women and three were men. Functional areas represented included residence life, financial aid, admissions, orientation, student activities, campus recreation, judicial affairs, and the campus union.

Data Collection

Erlandson et al. (1993) contended that the naturalistic researcher conducting qualitative research understands that objectivity in research is an illusion, thus freeing the researcher to truly collect and analyze data. They asserted that the researcher is a human instrument who collects and analyzes data through an interactive process. Information collected may be concrete and quantifiable such as years in the profession or number of professional development programs attended. Other information such as experiences, emotions, and morale may be more difficult to measure (Merriam, 1998). Data in qualitative studies are conveyed through words and are collected through various methods, such as individual interviews, focus groups, documentation review, and observations. Unlike the quantitative researcher, who follows a prescribed and rigid protocol for collecting and analyzing data, the qualitative researcher follows guidelines that can be modified and refined throughout the study.

Patton (2002) described three variations in qualitative interviewing: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized

open-ended interview. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses and serves a somewhat different purpose. The informal conversational interview allows for spontaneity on the part of the researcher. Questions are not predetermined in this approach but are constructed based on the conversation with the participant. The interview is informal and allows for exploration of new concepts based on the answers provided by the participant. The general interview guide approach is slightly more structured than the conversational approach but still allows the researcher some flexibility in the questions posed. Questions in this approach are promulgated based on participant's discussion around a certain topic. The goal is for the researcher to cover all topics being explored, which can be done using different questions for each participant. The final approach is the standardized open-ended interview, which is conducted by the researcher using a predetermined set of carefully worded questions. The standardized approach is highly focused to ensure that participants' time is used efficiently. In addition, the minimization of variation in responses makes them easier to locate and compare, which facilitates analysis of the collected data. This approach can be somewhat limiting to the researcher by not allowing for exploration of topics not considered in constructing the interview. As suggested by Patton (2002), this study employed a combination of these approaches to allow for greater flexibility during data collection,

For this study, face-to-face interviews were preferred; however, one interview was conducted over the telephone due to a scheduling conflict. The researcher traveled to the case study site to conduct face-to-face interviews, each ranging in length from 30 to 90 minutes. Participants were given the option to conduct the interview in their office or at another location. All participants requested for the interview to be held in their office. This allowed the researcher to observe the participant's work environment

before, during, and after the interview. Informed consent was obtained for each participant through an information sheet outlining their role in the study (Appendix C). Permission to audio record and transcribe the interviews was obtained from each participant. Measures were taken to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Data collection occurred through standardized open-ended interviews combined with a conversational strategy. The combination of these two approaches allowed for identification of similar motivational determinants across participants and allowed differences to emerge. Common questions were asked of each participant in a similar order to explore the concept of motivation; however, as themes and additional items emerged, those topics were pursued and explored. The protocols used in the interviews (Appendix D) were constructed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature. Interview questions were built using Vroom's (1964) theory of motivation and career stage theory as frameworks. Merriam (1998) suggested beginning interviews with relatively neutral, descriptive questions. The first questions were intended to set the participant at ease and establish rapport. The following questions were designed to explore the concept of workplace motivation and performance. The final structured question was designed to discover the perceptions of motivational determinants based on career stage (Appendix A). Finally, the researcher allowed the interviewee an opportunity to add information that might not have been addressed.

In addition to interviews, the researcher gained insight into the participants and the case study site through analysis of participant resumes/vitae and examination of the organizational chart and the strategic plan of the division of student affairs. The review of documents is an unobtrusive method used by the researcher which is "rich in portraying the values and beliefs of the participants" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 106). The vitae provided information about participants' prior career experiences,

educational background, awards and acknowledgements, and community and professional association involvement. The organizational chart reflected the complexity of the division of student affairs and the strategic plan provided insight into the values and goals of the division. Limited insight was also gained through the researcher's observation of the participants' office environment.

Trustworthiness

In any research study, the researcher must establish indicators that provide evidence that the information generated through the study is trustworthy and believable. Quantitative researchers are primarily concerned with reliability, validity, and objectivity. Alternatively, the qualitative researcher is focused on dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability in a qualitative study can be approached by examining the process of collecting and analyzing data. For example, a researcher should ensure that interviews, questions, and observations were reliably and validly constructed; documents and other data were properly analyzed; and findings were correct interpretations of the data (Merriam, 1998). A method proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish dependability is an "inquiry audit." An "auditor" is invited to challenge and support the researcher throughout the process, leading the auditor to attest to the dependability of the study. In this study the dissertation chair served in the auditor role by challenging, supporting, and guiding the researcher throughout the study, from the identification of the problem to the presentation of the findings.

To demonstrate credibility, the researcher must show that "the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 201). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested employing the technique of triangulation to improve the credibility of findings. In this

study participants' resumes verified their progression in the field and positional tenure as a mid-level administrator. The division of student affairs organizational chart verified the positional tenure of the participant. This triangulation of information provided corroborating evidence and established major themes.

In addition to triangulation, participants in a study can be used to check the accuracy of the collected data to validate that the reconstructions are adequate representations of their own realities. This process, known as member checking, also serves to enhance the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking rests on the importance of checking how accurately participants' realities have been represented in the final account. Informal member checking was conducted throughout the interviews. The researcher periodically restated a participant's response for verification and allowed the participant to confirm the researcher's feedback or restate the response to correct the researcher's interpretation. In a more formal capacity after the recorded data were transcribed, major themes were extracted and presented in written form to the participant. Each participant was given an opportunity to provide feedback on the accuracy and overall adequacy of the data.

Transferability in a qualitative study lies more with the researcher who intends to apply the research findings from the initial study to a subsequent study than with the original researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings but to offer a comprehensive, thick description of the phenomena being studied. To enhance the possibility of applying the findings to other groups, the researcher attempted to provide enough description to allow future researchers the opportunity to compare the situation in the present study with their research situation to determine whether results would be transferrable. Detailed descriptions of participants were provided, without sacrificing anonymity, to describe

the situations and experiences particular to each participant. Dependability and confirmability in the study were achieved by maintaining an audit trail composed of raw data (digital recordings of interviews, written notes, and other documents), data reduction and analysis products (transcripts, data cards, and theoretical notes), and data reconstruction and synthesis products (the dissertation).

Data Analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1997) stated that qualitative data analysis is a search for common statements about relationships and underlying themes. A qualitative design is emergent; thus, data analysis in qualitative research begins at the point data are collected. The naturalistic researcher is constantly analyzing data to determine the path of the inquiry. This path may take turns based on the data that are constantly being collected and analyzed.

Strategies for analysis serve as guides to assist the researcher in deriving findings from the collected data. Merriam (1998) identified several theory-based analysis approaches commonly found in educational research, including ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and the constant comparative method. Often, the strategy of inquiry selected by the researcher can point toward the data analysis technique that should be used.

The body of data analyzed in this study consisted of recordings, transcripts, observation notes, and related documents. Inherent to qualitative research seeking to capture thick, descriptive data is the challenge of distilling the complex data to smaller, analyzable segments. However, the distillation of the data does not simply imply that data analysis is the reduction of data; in fact, it is the induction of data that allows the researcher to reconstruct meaning from the constructions that have emerged from the

participant-researcher interaction (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). Various strategies exist to analyze qualitative data.

Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed. Within a few weeks of the interview, the transcript was sent to the participant for modification and/or verification. Three elements were used in this study during the data analysis process: data unitization, emergent category designation, and negative case analysis (Erlandson et al., 1993). The first step was unitizing the collected data. This process involved disaggregating data into the smallest piece of information that communicated one idea. A coding system was developed and applied for reviewing the transcripts to break the data into units of analysis, keeping in mind that “while coding an incident or a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106). The data were then deconstructed to prepare for the next step: categorization. By reading and categorizing the data, a researcher begins to see categories emerge (Erlandson et al., 1993). A qualitative, constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of data analysis was used to determine theme data. This process allowed the researcher to continue the unfolding of the inquiry and led to maximal understanding of the phenomenon being studied in its context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data are re-examined even after categories have been established to determine whether further categories or subcategories emerge. Through this categorization, the researcher begins to identify concepts and construct realities (Erlandson et al., 1993). Simultaneously, themes that had not been identified by the researcher or informed by the theoretical and conceptual framework also began to emerge. These participant-constructed themes were questioned, clarified, and confirmed for verification.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research design, limitations were evident in this study. This study was limited to data collected from mid-level student administrators at one institution. A single-institution case study design does not allow for findings to be generalized easily to other institutions. However, findings are transferable to future research with similar research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, the functional areas of the participants did not represent all functional areas found in student affairs divisions. Given that structure and composition of divisions of student affairs vary from institution to institution (Sandeem, 2001), this would be a difficult task to achieve in a single institution case study design.

The institution selected is classified as an HSI. Hirt (2006) found that student affairs professionals who work at HSIs embrace the uniqueness of their work, which is shaped by the rapidly changing environment in which they work and the students whom they serve. However, Hirt (2006) contended that student affairs professionals at HSIs are shaped not only by their HSI designation but also by their classification type (research designation, size, state versus religiously affiliated, etc.). Thus, studying student affairs professionals at an HSI may further limit the transferability of the data.

Another identified limitation is that time was a limited resource for both the researcher and the participants. Although attempts were made to observe the participants' environment during the interview, gaining a feel for the institutional environment and extensive observation of the participants in their work environment was not possible. Participants were gracious in allowing for the interview time to be extended when needed; however, out of respect for their time, follow-up questions were kept to a minimum. Due to scheduling conflicts, one participant interview was

conducted by telephone. Although this arrangement was convenient, it precluded observation of the participant's work environment.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This chapter reports the findings regarding perceptions of the motivational factors that impacted their performance in their work roles as reported by 10 mid-level student affairs administrators employed at one university. In an effort to provide context in which to understand the participants' comments, the chapter begins with a brief description of each participant, including information on current position, length of tenure as a mid-level student affairs administrator, number of staff supervised, and career path and aspirations. Following this description, the data are presented in four categories that emerged during analysis: (a) serving students, (b) serving staff, (c) reinforcement of self, and (d) institutional culture. As opposed to deductive analysis, where categories are prescribed beforehand, an inductive analysis approach was used to allow patterns, themes, and categories to emerge from the data that were collected via interviews and document analysis (Patton, 2002). The categories and subthemes within each category tell the story of what these mid-level student affairs administrators perceived motivated them to perform in their work roles. Verbatim quotes from the participants are included to confirm, and more realistically exemplify, the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings. A discussion of the findings in relation to the study's theoretical framework, as introduced in Chapter II, is presented in Chapter V.

Profiles of the Individual Participants

Ten participants were selected and interviewed for this study; at the time of the interviews, all of the participants were employed at the same institution and held a mid-level position in student affairs. Their career paths leading to their current position

varied; some had followed the traditional route of graduating from a student affairs (or related) graduate program, while others had entered the student affairs profession after working outside higher education. Regardless of the path, all of the participants were eager to share information about their current position, career path, and aspirations. In an effort to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms are used for the names of the participants, and the name of the university has been withheld.

Rita

At the time that these data were collected, Rita held a master's degree in human sciences and was the director of new student orientation and family programs, a position she had held for 10 years. She was responsible for the supervision, development, and evaluation of six professional staff members, four graduate assistants, and 30 student staff members.

Rita had been exposed to student affairs during her service as a resident assistant and as a student leader.

I think, as with a lot of folks here in Student Affairs, it is not something that you see in a catalogue. . . . It was something that, as I pursued my undergraduate degree, I saw in motion, in modeling. I saw our Director of Housing and our Campus Ministers and I said, "Oh, I wanna do that!"

Rita started her professional career in student affairs as an admissions counselor for her alma mater. After a couple of years as an admissions counselor, Rita "wanted more student contact," so she moved from admissions to the world of student activities. She served in a mid-level position at another institution for 8 years as the Assistant Director of Campus Activities and then as the Director of new student orientation, transition, and leadership programs prior to assuming her current position.

Rita comes from a Hispanic, blue-collar family who had impressed on her the importance of an education, a value that she and her husband are passing on to their daughter. Rita stated that her current position affords her the opportunity to spend time

with her family away from the job and that family/work balance is important to her at this stage in her life.

Beth

Beth held a master's degree in kinesiology and, at the time of this study, served as the Director of campus recreation, a position she has held for 3 years. As Director, she supervised 12 professional staff, three support staff, and six custodial staff. Beth entered a career in student affairs "by accident," the result of "being in the right place at the right time." While working as a student assistant in the campus recreation center, she accepted a graduate assistant position to pay for graduate school. She was then offered her first professional position, as the assistant director over operations and aquatics, because she was the only graduate assistant who had also been a life guard. She remained in that assistant director role for 6 years. Since her initial position, Beth has held progressively responsible positions at three institutions, mostly in the field of campus recreation and student activities. She had served as a mid-level administrator for 10 years at another institution before assuming her current position.

Beth is a former athlete, an attribute that she stated had helped to shape her motivation to always "succeed or improve." Campus recreation is her "love" and she is comfortable remaining in her current position.

Tom

Tom held a master's degree in agriculture and served as the Director of the university center (student union), a position he had held for 6 years. In his role as director, he was responsible for the supervision of 45 full-time staff and 120 student staff. He is a seasoned mid-level administrator, having served in a mid-level role for 12 years.

As an international student, Tom's intention was to finish a master's degree and move back to his home country to work. Tom happened upon student affairs when he accepted a graduate hall director position because of the benefit of receiving free tuition. After working in residence life for 8 years, his first mid-level position was as associate director of the student center. Looking for a new challenge, he was intrigued by the job announcement of his current position. He believed that it would give him an "opportunity to be a part of something from the start up."

Tom expressed interest in obtaining a position as an associate vice president in student affairs or business affairs. He realized that this might not be a possibility at his current institution due to the stability of the current administration; thus, he was open to the idea that he might have to move to another institution to obtain a promotion. Tom identified two factors that would lead him to remain in his current position a little longer: pursuing a doctorate and family. He discussed an interest in entering a doctoral program to prepare him to move to the next level. Tom also indicated that his family was a factor in his current decision to remain at this institution.

Jessica

Jessica held a master's degree in educational administration and had served as the associate director of admissions for 2 years. She supervised nine professional staff members in this role. Prior to her current position, she had served as a mid-level administrator in admissions for 6.5 years at another institution.

During her undergraduate years, Jessica met the man who would become her partner. She began working in admissions for her alma mater, where she continued for 8 years. Based on some office dynamics, she left admissions work briefly, only to return 9 months later to work in admissions at another institution. She was drawn to her current

position by the opportunity to work for someone whom she considered a mentor in the field.

Jessica identified strongly with her Hispanic heritage and felt a connection, not only with the institution but the community in which she lived. She stated a strong belief in family and said that she drew motivation from her daughter: “I want my daughter to see that I made a difference in the lives of other people.” As a first-generation college student, she felt a commitment to helping others gain access to higher education.

Jessica wrestled with being either a director or a vice president as her end goal, knowing that her commitments to her family would continue to shape her decision. Having a young child, she wanted to make sure that she has the time to be involved in her daughter’s life. However, Jessica is interested in eventually pursuing a doctorate and has considered entering the program at her current institution, where she saw the position of director of admissions as her next step.

Janice

Janice held a master’s degree in adult and higher education administration and served in a dual role as the Assistant Dean of student life and the Director of student judicial affairs. She has been at her current institution for 11 years and has served in a mid-level role for the past 6 years. She is responsible for the supervision of three professional staff and one administrative staff member.

Janice entered student affairs as a hall director but left the profession to pursue a career in the juvenile probation system. After almost 10 years as a probation officer, responsibilities as a new mother led her to explore other employment. “I kind of happened into this field because my personal situation compelled me to . . . Had I not been a mom . . . I may never have found this field.” In her search for a new job, she

found a position in student affairs that allowed her to transfer her skills from her previous career. “What attracted me to the position, truly, was its parallel with what I was doing in juvenile probation, which was the work that I love. . . . It was unbelievable, how close it was.”

Janice is comfortable in her current position and enjoys that, through the student conduct process, she has the opportunity to “be educational” and “transform student lives.” Although she is always open to new opportunities, she does not currently aspire to a CSAO position.

Frank

Frank held a doctorate of education in educational leadership and served as the Director of student activities. Completing his 5th year as Director, he is responsible for the supervision of 13 professional staff members.

Frank realized that he wanted to pursue student affairs as a career early in his undergraduate years.

I was an undergraduate student, and I was in a math class and I realized that doing 20 hours a week of math homework competed with my 20 hours a week in involvement. I was involved in activities for student government, a resident assistant, and an orientation leader In talking with an advisor . . . I learned there was a master’s degree option in this realm called College Student Personnel. . . . At that point I decided that that’s what I wanted to do.

Frank began his student affairs career immediately after undergraduate study as a traveling consultant for his fraternity. After completing a master’s degree in student affairs, he worked at three institutions prior to joining his current institution. Frank stated that it is important to have a strong work ethic. He reported that he does not mind working long hours at his job. The son of two blue-collar parents, he expressed, “Even if I am here until midnight, it is not hard work. When you are out in the Texas heat like my mom was for hours . . . that’s hard work.”

Frank is married and has two small children. Although his work as Director requires working some late nights, he appreciates the flexibility in his schedule to attend events at his children's school during the day. He expressed interest in eventually moving into a dean of students or vice president role but is currently satisfied with his present position. "As long as I can continue to be challenged and as long as my bosses are pleased with what I'm doing, I want to stick around here for a little bit longer."

Valeria

Valeria held a master's degree in counseling and student affairs and served as the Associate Director of residence life and education. She had held this position for almost 3 years and was responsible for the supervision, training, and evaluation of four professional staff members and 35 student resident assistants. Prior to her position at her current institution, she served as a mid-level administrator in residence life at another institution for 4 years.

Valeria has always been interested in helping people. While pursuing a master's degree in counseling, she became interested in serving college-age students. One of her graduate faculty was married to the vice president for student affairs at the institution and encouraged her to speak to him about student affairs. She soon found herself in a graduate assistantship in admissions and then moved into residence life after graduation.

Valeria stated that she has always believed that her "family and personal life always come first." She said that she is committed to learning and growing personally and professionally but always makes room in her life for other people. Valeria did not consider herself "one of those career-oriented people who are on a path to promotion." Recently married and new to her position, Valeria felt that she still had more to offer in her current position and was not actively seeking to leave her position soon.

I've been here 2 years now . . . it will be 2 years in August. . . . We have a long way to go to get to the point of excellence . . . where I see it in my head. . . . We have some ways to go before we get there and I'd like to see it to that point.

Andrea

Andrea held a master's degree in student affairs administration and was the Assistant Director of Greek life, a role that she had held for 2 years. As the assistant director, she supervised one professional staff member. Her job allowed her to supervise staff but still gave her ample exposure to working with students. In her first mid-level position, she found her new responsibility of supervision a challenging task.

Andrea discovered the student affairs profession when she was a student leader but did not consider it as a career path until two student organization advisors "planted the seed" and encouraged her to think about it as a career.

When I was in undergraduate . . . I immediately got involved in my sorority. . . . My interactions with my Greek Advisor is why I am here because, hands down, he led me. . . . He helped lay the foundation of where I am today. . . . He introduced me to the profession of student affairs.

After receiving her master's degree, Andrea wanted a change from the large public institutions from which she had received her degrees and wanted to be closer to her family. She went to work at a small, private institution as the coordinator of campus activities, where she "wore many hats": advising student government, Greek life, honor societies, and orientation. Realizing her preference for working at public institutions and working in Greek life, she obtained her current position.

Andrea aspired to be a director of student activities at a medium-size public institution but noted that she needs a "plethora of experiences" before she can get there. She has considered pursuing a doctorate and stated that her next position should be at an institution where she would be able to obtain the degree.

Brian

Brian held a master's degree in higher education administration and served as the Assistant Director of admissions, a position he had held for 3 years. He supervised one professional staff member, one graduate assistant, and eight student assistants.

Brian had originally planned to enter law, but he was not convinced that he was suited for a career in that field. His experiences as a student leader and his interactions with student affairs professionals on campus caused him to rethink his career goals.

Throughout college I was engaged in student organizations, specifically service organizations, and pretty involved on campus. I obviously had a good experience with that, so I saw the positive impact of student affairs and student engagement and learning outside the classroom.

Brian has always had an interest in larger higher education policy issues, such as access and affordability. This interest drew him to his current field in admissions and enrollment management. He has worked in admissions at two universities, gaining progressively more experience.

Still young in his career, Brian was uncertain of the next position to which he aspired. However, he expressed interest in ultimately obtaining a position as vice president or assistant vice president. Eager to advance his career, he was motivated to take on additional responsibilities to gain more experience.

Amy

Amy held a bachelor's degree in communication and served as the assistant director of financial aid and enrollment services. Of all the participants, she was the newest to her mid-level role, having served in the position 2 years. She supervises 10 full-time staff members during the year and usually hires four more seasonal workers during the summer.

Although Amy was exposed to student affairs during her undergraduate years as a student assistant in financial aid, she held some positions in retail after graduation.

When she saw the posting for a position in financial aid at her alma mater, she eagerly applied. Amy described her experiences:

I had never considered higher education as a career path originally . . . but I really enjoyed being in the college environment. So I interviewed, got the position, and when I got into it, I really kind of fell in love with it. . . . After I started in that position, I applied for a supervisor position, I got that, and I fell in love with financial aid.

Amy enjoys being able to help students to find pathways to higher education.

She saw herself staying in student affairs and was currently focused on “growing in financial aid.” Amy hopes to continue gaining skills and competencies so that, when the position of director of financial aid is available, she will be prepared to apply.

Summary

Each of the 10 participants brought different professional and personal experiences to their positions as student affairs mid-level administrators. Table 1 provides a summary of the study participants’ current positions and experience as mid-level administrators. The following sections record what these administrators reported that motivated them to engage in their work as student affairs professionals, particularly serving students and serving staff.

Serving Students

Andrea stated, “I am just so student focused that they are my main motivator.” Janice agreed: “The motivation for me is really that student—the individual student, . . . who could be any age range, shape, color. . . . Working with this population of students is the motivation.”

In a profession dedicated to the development of the whole student in a higher education environment, it is not surprising to find that all of the participants mentioned the opportunity to serve students as the primary motivating factor. The participants were

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Title	Number of years as a mid-level administrator	Number of staff supervised in current role
Rita	Director	18	6 full-time staff 4 graduate assistants c. 30 students
Beth	Director	12	21 full-time staff
Tom	Director	10	45 full-time staff 120 students
Jessica	Associate Director	9	9 full-time staff
Janice	Assistant Dean of Students	7	4 full-time staff
Frank	Director	6	13 full-time staff
Valeria	Associate Director	6	4 full-time staff 35 students
Brian	Assistant Director	3	1 full-time staff 1 graduate assistant 8 students
Amy	Assistant Director	2	10 full-time staff
Andrea	Assistant Director	2	1 full-time staff

motivated by the thought of having an impact on a student's life and contributing to the student's growth and development (Figure 1).

Impacting Student Lives

As an Assistant Director of Greek Life, Andrea is in a position to have direct contact with students. Although some of her interactions with students involve difficult issues, such as maintaining the ethical and academic standards of the organization,

Figure 1
Summary of Participant Interview Data: Serving Students

Participants indicated the opportunity to impact student learning and development as a reason for entering the field.

Participants indicated the opportunity to impact student learning and development as a reason for remaining in the field.

Participants were motivated by the opportunity to impact student learning and development.

Participants felt having the opportunity to impact student learning and development alleviate some of the stressors inherent to mid-level administrators' roles.

Participants felt rewarded when they saw students learn and develop first hand.

Participants felt rewarded when students acknowledged the impact participants had on their lives.

Participants were willing to perform at tasks if they felt it contributed to serving students.

Participants expressed concern that career advancement would result in less direct contact with and impact on students.

Andrea sees these as opportunities for intentional, developmental conversations with the students, which motivates her in her role as a mid-level administrator.

The interaction with the students, I love my one-on-one interactions. I work with aspects of Greek life that, sometimes, is sort of yucky stuff. I work with grades, I work with our accreditation program but those two things allow me to work one-on-one with chapters that I feel has a fast impact on them to help them accept and meet the standards and the values of their organizations. Every time I have a one-on-one, I feel that those students walk away happier and feeling more engaged, more supported, and feel like they can be more successful. Having those experiences really motivates me.

In addition to her one-on-one work with students, Andrea is motivated by the opportunity to present to groups of students, where her impact is far reaching.

Every time I get to do presentations, I get to develop the leaders, whether it's at leadership conferences or presentations that are directly for the students. I realized those are some of my happiest times. Because I love developing those

programs and then having the students walk away excited about the activity that I incorporated into the program so that they can learn the skill of how to delegate or how to create operations manuals or that kind of stuff. Those things really motivate me a lot.

Many of the participants spoke of the opportunities to be a part of moments that lead a student to learn and grow as a motivating factor. Janice explained,

The opportunity to work and serve in the student affairs profession, to really work with the students and serve the students in such a way to hopefully lead them to transformation . . . being the “fire under their behinds” to get them moving or get them thinking in that next direction for themselves . . . there’s not really a parallel.

Frank relayed that he enjoys watching students grow and having a part in that growth. “I love when I can make a difference. I love when I can challenge a student and they have a light come on. That is, by and large, just exuberance for me.” In his role in student activities, he is fortunate to see the transformation of students first hand. “In the [student] activities world, you can see students start as freshmen, grow, and then graduate and then come back. You can see that growth happening. I enjoy that!”

Frank enjoyed taking time at the end of the day to reflect on the possible impact that his work had had on students that day. Even though he would be satisfied with touching the life of one student, he hopes that his efforts have impacted more.

What I try to do when I go home each night [is] to think about, “Did I make a difference for a student today?” Just one. Knowing that the reality is that I can say “Yes” to just one, the reality is that I hopefully impacted more than one.

Tom, the Director of the student union, shared that working with students on his advisory board keeps him motivated and committed to his position. He talked about seeing the transformation of one student, now a senior, who had started on the board when she was a freshman.

I don’t get a chance to do that [work with students] very often but I like the interaction with students. I think that that’s probably one of the reasons why I’ve stayed . . . trying to help get students from point A to point B. When I look at the young woman on our Advisory Council now and when I look at where she was when she started, there is a distinct difference.

Helping students get an education is one of the main motivators for Jessica, an Associate Director in admissions. She is proud to be part of a field that connects students with institutions of higher education.

I think that intrinsically, it's a matter of the biggest thing they [students] can do for themselves is educate themselves. And so that, in my job, keeps me going . . . that gets me excited, that gets me motivated, being a part of a profession that is going to change the world. I mean, that's what keeps me going to work every day.

Worth the Stress

The responsibilities associated with a mid-level position include supervision of staff, budget management, and providing leadership for an office or a department. Participants shared some of the challenges associated with their mid-level positions, such as managing politics, resolving conflicts, and implementing decisions of which they were not a part. In the midst of the stress associated with their positions, the participants shared that knowing that they were serving students helped them to manage the stress. When faced with mounds of paper work, Frank reminded himself that, "I need to put that all aside because the student that's in front of me is the most important."

Amy, an assistant director in financial aid, enjoys the opportunity to work with current and prospective students in finding ways to finance their education. She realizes that the work that she and her staff do can be the difference in a student attending the institution. She enjoys having this type of impact on a student's life and believes that it helps her through the stress and challenges that she encounters at work.

I really kind of fell in love with the financial aid process. . . . I felt at the end of my day that, although it could be extremely stressful, I felt like because students had talked with me or my team mates, they were able to go to school, where they might not have known before because they did not know that it was financially possible.

As the Director of Student Activities, Frank works long hours and frequently works on the weekends, attending student organization meetings and events. Despite the

long hours and tireless work, having an opportunity to make an impact on a student remains the main motivator in keeping his busy schedule.

The students [motivate him], particularly if I know that I'm getting through to them. When I know that I have genuinely impacted a student, then I'll go extra miles for them. It's this weird connection, that I'll just push, and push, and push.

Seeing the Fruits of Their Labor

Making a difference and *having an impact on students' lives* serve as motivators to these participants. Unfortunately, seeing the impact of their efforts on students is not always apparent or immediate. It may be years before a student understands or acknowledges the impact that a student affairs professional had in his or her life. Even so, many of the participants noted how rewarding it can be when even one former student returns to talk about the administrator's impact. Many of Janice's interactions with students as the Director of student judicial affairs, are connected with student conduct proceedings. Although these conversations are educational in nature, at times they can be interpreted by the student as adversarial. Often, Janice has to wait to see the impact on a student. However, Janice noted that one comment from a student can have a lasting effect on her motivation.

I always say we're "easy" in judicial affairs and student affairs because that one student in our whole career that tells you, that takes that moment and tells you, "You know what? I listened to what you said." . . . It's that student who comes back and says, "The best thing that happened to me is that you held me accountable and you made me look at something." . . . that "Aha!" moment . . . we live for those. I live for those.

Similarly, Rita explained the validation that she feels when a former student returns to visit.

When a student comes in and starts talking with you, or students come back and visit you, I think those are the things that you think back about and say, "You know, my job is important and I do make the difference."

Motivation to Perform a Specific Task

Although many participants talked about “serving students” as a general motivator to perform, many gave examples of how students motivated them to perform specific tasks in their work role. Frank discussed that everything he does comes back to serving students. He is able to get through some of the tasks that he does not particularly enjoy by keeping in mind how even that task will impact students.

The bottom line is the students. Budgets, for example . . . putting together a request for additional student service fees. Well, that has to be done, it has to be done on time, and it has to be done right. At the end of the day, if we get more money to help our students, then rock on!

Andrea reported working long hours to transform their office into a “train station” for welcome days. She said that she did not object to the extra effort because she knew that her hard work would “add a little bit more to the student’s experience.” Similarly, Beth noted that the thought of “helping students become better leaders” motivated her to work with her colleagues in creating a leadership course for their student supervisors.

Moving Up and Moving Out of Contact With Students

Interactions and the ability to impact students is an important piece of these professionals’ motivation enter the field of student affairs. One of the challenges of moving up the student affairs career ladder is losing direct contact with students. For the participants in this study, the opportunities to interact personally with students and implement programs that assist in student development lessened when they moved into their mid-level roles.

All of the participants who currently held director positions expressed concern about the limited time that they get to spend with students. However, recognizing the importance of having student contact in their work lives, most of these administrators had found ways to continue having contact with students. Previously, Tom, the Director

of the student union noted that he does not have the opportunity to work with students very often, so he tries to keep in contact by having students serve on his advisory council.

As the Director of campus recreation, Beth acknowledged that she has to make an effort not to lose contact with students. She said that she takes every opportunity to be involved in activities such as student staff training and teaching CPR/First Aid and leadership classes to maintain interactions with students, “so I am out there with them [the students] but it’s definitely not the same contact that you have when you are the front line as an Assistant Director.” Despite these efforts by directors, many of the participants acknowledged that moving up in the student affairs hierarchy meant possibly losing day-to-day contact with students. This troubled some of the participants because “working with students” was the most enjoyable part of their jobs.

The Reason for Staying

Serving students was not only a motivator for performance; it was also the reason most frequently cited by participants for remaining in student affairs. Beth said, “My number one reason [for staying] is seeing students grow.” Although some of the participants had considered leaving the profession for various reasons, most remained in their positions because the positions offered an opportunity to work with individual students. “I really did not intend on staying on [in student affairs] but I guess my vocation of helping people is probably why I stayed on, and that’s why I’ve always liked it.”

Serving Staff

One of the new responsibilities associated with a mid-level administrator position is supervision of professional staff. Many participants saw the addition of this responsibility as creating a new motivator to perform: the opportunity to impact staff.

Participants embraced their supervisory responsibilities and said that they were motivated to perform the associated supervisory tasks when they knew that their effort would result in the growth and development of their staff (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Summary of Participant Interview Data: Serving Staff

Supervision of professional staff members is a job function of mid-level administrators.

Participants felt a responsibility to develop their subordinates as good professionals.

Participants felt a responsibility to role model professional behavior for subordinate staff.

As the Director of the student union, Tom was responsible for the supervision of 45 full-time professionals. Tom noted that the motivators have changed over time. Whereas he used to be motivated by outcomes that were focused on his own benefit, he is now motivated by the opportunity to provide for his staff. Tom described his recognition of this new motivator.

I won't say that what motivated me when I was a Hall Coordinator is the same thing that motivates me today. The scope of my job is much broader and I deal with more . . . so there are definitely changes in what I do. What I've seen about my job changing is it is now about giving to my staff . . . giving my staff the necessary tools to be successful in what they want to do.

Second only to developing students, most of the participants discussed the opportunity to develop and mentor staff as one of the prime aspects that they enjoyed about their mid-level positions. New to his mid-level position as an Assistant Director of admissions responsible for the supervision of one full-time staff member and one graduate assistant, Brian expressed his delight in seeing his staff grow.

I enjoy my role as a supervisor. . . . I enjoy working with them [staff] and I enjoy when they become comfortable and start being pro-active. I kind of see how the training we've done and just how closely we work together and when someone kind of gets it, that's a really great moment and the work becomes more rewarding.

Developing Good Professionals

Eight of the 10 participants mentioned serving staff by impacting their personal and professional growth as a motivator to perform. Valeria, Amy, and Jessica shared their commitment to providing professional development opportunities for their staffs to develop good professionals to serve the individual, the institution, and the profession.

As an Associate Director of residence life and education who supervises four full-time professionals, Valeria enjoyed the opportunity to impact the growth and development of her staff. Although some of the participants had worked in the profession for couple of years after gaining a master's degree, they were still relatively new to the profession and new to the institution.

The thing that I love best about this job is bringing in those new professionals and being able to work with them and being a part of what I think is [an] amazing thing . . . being with a housing program from the start-up but then also getting them to their next position of where they want to be. I just like that developmental piece in what I do. So for me, that's number one [motivator].

In her role as an Assistant Director in financial aid, Amy supervises 10 full-time staff. As a new mid-level professional, she enjoys being able to build a team and provide training opportunities for her staff. She also sees the importance of developing her staff on the chance that one day they will be her successors.

What I try to do in this position is hopefully coach the supervisors that report directly to me into getting them to the level where they might be able to step up into my position and then getting their employees to step into their positions.

Jessica, an Associate Director in Admissions who supervises nine professional staff members, shared that developing staff is the main reason that she assumed her current position. She considered that it is her responsibility to develop young staff, not

only to prepare them for their own careers but to also produce good professionals who will serve their present institution and, ultimately, the field of enrollment management.

I love the staff. That's the whole reason I do it, the whole reason I am moved into leadership Shaping the young professionals in that career is what draws me to it. . . . Shaping the future of our profession is what I love about the mid-level management.

Being a Role Model

As mid-level administrators supervising full-time staff, many participants noted that the responsibility of being a good role model for staff served as a motivator for them to perform in their roles. As a director of a large department, Tom reported that he strived to be a good leader for his staff.

I need to be fair, I need to be ethical, I need to be inclusive in my approach and the way I do everything. . . . As a leader, I can't afford to be marginal, so I always have to give it 100% because everybody's looking to me. . . . I need to be a good role model. If I'm not modeling the behavior that I expect, then what we produce as an organization will be marginal. It starts at the top. I think that's motivation.

As a supervisor of young staff, Valeria was cognizant of her influence as a role model to her staff. She took this role seriously and was motivated to fulfill this responsibility.

What motivates me is that I know that I'm the role model for my coordinators . . . and that they look to me to see what's right, what's ethical, what they should be doing as a housing professional in higher education.

Reinforcement of Self

The participants spoke of internal and external motivators that impacted a reinforcement of self, strengthening and increasing their own professional and/or personal gain. They spoke of internal motivators, such as a hard work ethic and a responsibility to family, that motivated them to perform, and of external motivators, received from outside sources, such as opportunities for professional development, recognition, and pay (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Summary of Participant Interview Data: Reinforcement of Self

Internal Motivators		
<i>Strong Work Ethic</i>	<i>Need for Achievement</i>	
Participants indicated that they were motivated by a strong work ethic.	Participants indicated that they were motivated by a need for achievement and wanting to be “the best they could be.”	
External Motivators		
<i>Professional Development</i>	<i>Recognition</i>	<i>Pay</i>
Participants desired opportunities to enhance skills and competencies through professional development opportunities.	Participants felt rewarded when they were recognized by their students and colleagues. Participants felt more rewarded when they were recognized by a supervisor or division leadership. Participants appreciated formal and informal methods of recognition.	Participants expressed appreciation of monetary rewards but indicated that they were not a factor impacting motivation. Participants relayed that the opportunity to receive higher salaries was an enticement to leave but other rewards received in current positions mitigated intentions to leave.

Internally Driven

Many participants spoke of an “internal drive” that motivates them to perform. Several participants spoke of having a strong work ethic that guides their behavior or of feeling responsible for doing their best to represent their family, culture, or profession. Beth spoke of an internal work ethic: “I think it is how I was raised, by my parents pushed us to always to do our best, so that’s a huge motivator or my work ethic. I was never to let someone down.”

Brian, Valeria, and Beth mentioned a need for achievement serving as a motivator. Brian said, “I’ve always kind of been motivated to do my best and dare to be someone who outperforms others, whether it is through hard work or furthering my education.” Similarly, Beth noted that her experience and her staff’s experiences as former athletes shaped their sense of competition and their desire to be the best: “I think a lot of our motivation as a department also comes from a sense of [being on a] team and being athletes . . . motivation to always succeed or improve instead of staying stagnant.”

The three Hispanic participants in the study, Valeria, Rita, and Jessica, all mentioned that they were motivated by a feeling of responsibility to their families and their culture to perform well in their roles. Valeria explained that her internal motivation to do well stems from her Hispanic, Catholic upbringing.

The first thought for me is my own personal internal desire to do well, to do my best at everything. If I don’t perform to the level that I know I can perform . . . it’s that internal Catholic guilt, Hispanic guilt, call it whatever you want to, but it just doesn’t gel well with me at all. . . . Just knowing your potential and not reaching it, I mean, I can just picture my mother and her look of disappointment—not even disappointment, it’s that being disappointed in you, [the] kind of look that she was so good at giving.

Jessica and Rita were the first members of their families to attend college. Jessica expressed that her parents were a motivator for her. They had always set high expectations and had expected her to do her best. Rita derived a similar motivation from her parents. She grew up in a blue-collar household where her parents repeatedly said, “Don’t work as hard as we do—get an education.” In addition to being motivated by her parents, she said that felt a responsibility to model this for her daughter.

I think it’s important that . . . as a Hispanic woman . . . we’re shaping what will be our future. It’s important for my daughter to see, “My mom’s got an education, this is what her education was able to offer our family” and I valued that. I want my daughter, my only child, to see that mommy has a responsibility, this is what my mom does, this is what she does for the students, this is how her job makes a difference. . . . That’s what motivates me.

Opportunities for Professional Development

Several of the participants mentioned the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities that allowed them to build new skills and competencies as motivation to perform in their current positions. Amy, a mid-level administrator new to her role, described her experience in working on a project that was delegated to her by her supervisor.

Being entrusted with projects that stretch me a little bit and puts me outside my comfort zone [motivates her]. One in particular that really stretched me: I was nominated to be the assessment person for our department. I [said], “Oh, my God! I don’t know if I can do that!” But I saw it as a challenge, and I felt really privileged that I was picked to do that, and it was good.

Brian, another professional new to his mid-level role, described opportunities that allowed him to develop professionally and motivated him to perform because they moved him toward his goal of professional advancement.

I want to get as far as I can in this profession and I feel like . . . I don’t want to waste time. So if I can advance my career as quickly as possible, that would be great. I am not as interested in salaries and getting raises in pay, but if I could get more responsibilities and have more impact, positive impact, be able to touch more projects, have my fingerprint on those, that’s what kind of motivates me.

Serving on university committees was seen by some participants as an opportunity to develop professionally. In addition to working on additional projects, Brian enjoyed “working more closely with people across campus on committees.” He noted that, since his promotion to a mid-level position, he has had the opportunity to sit on more committees that allow him to network with other professionals. Andrea echoed Brian’s sentiments: “Having those opportunities to work on different committees, that’s definitely a positive.”

Having entered student affairs without a traditional student affairs master’s degree, Beth commented that serving on committees had allowed her to learn more about other functional areas at the university.

Working on committees across the campus and learning about student affairs is probably one of my favorite things. When you grow up in campus recreation, you do not realize what the registrar does until you serve on a committee with that person. So that's probably one of my favorites.

Recognition

Recognition, both written and verbal, was seen by most of the participants as a motivator to perform. Participants gave various examples of ways in which they felt recognized by supervisors, colleagues, and students. Frank commented,

I am also motivated, not so much that I need praise and appreciation, but it is nice every once in a while to hear, "You did a nice job with that" or "Wow, that really worked well!" So the positive encouragement is there; that is not why I do what I do, but it helps.

Similarly, Amy expressed her appreciation for the occasional acknowledgement that she is doing well: "Just the little "thank you" notes or "you are doing a really good job" motivates me the most." Beth described that a personal reward for her is when "somebody else recognizes that you've done something good. It doesn't have to be monetary, just somebody knowing that you are actually doing good work."

Although any recognition was appreciated by the participants, most reported that they felt particularly motivated when that recognition came from a supervisor or another leader in the division. Brian had been recently nominated by his supervisor and received the "Rising Staff" award given by the professional association to which he belongs. He described how motivating it was to be recognized by his supervisor in this way.

Frank expressed that, when he received recognition from his CSAO, he felt that his work was valued. He commented, "We have a vice president right now who is amazing at just sending you a handwritten 'thank you' note every so often." Janice and Rita agreed, stating that it is rewarding when a supervisor shows appreciation for their work. Andrea expressed her appreciation of other people's recognition of her efforts:

I like compliments. We have this thing in department that we do in our staff meetings where we acknowledge good work. I like to be recognized for things that I do well. I am an achiever and so I like to achieve a goal and like people to

know that I've achieved that goal and like to know that someone's happy with the outcome. I think I find my own excitement in other people's appreciation for it or just feeling happier, successful that I have accomplished it and made an impact.

Amy reported that she enjoys attention from her supervisor but in a different manner: She feels rewarded when her supervisor acknowledges her by asking her opinion.

I feel pretty rewarded. I feel like I get recognized on that performance evaluation because I think I work really hard. The fact that I get delegated more, I am trusted, and my opinion is asked means a lot to me, whether it's stated or not. I know when the Director of Financial Aid is asking me my opinion on something, that means that I know something, which is good.

Being nominated for awards by supervisors, regardless of whether the reward is received, was seen by a couple of participants as recognition. Beth noted,

My Associate VP just nominated me for the Leadership of the Year Award. I didn't get it. But he thought of me and that's what I thanked him for . . . at least thinking that I was in that position.

In addition to being acknowledged by their supervisors, several participants mentioned feeling rewarded when they or their work was acknowledged by their colleagues. Brian explained,

When we host events, I think the most rewarding kind of comments come from people who have been on campus for 10 to 15 years, . . . who say, "This is the best one [event] we've had in years," or "We've never done this idea before and it really worked out really well." Comments like that are really rewarding, just to know that somebody notices the little difference you made, or maybe a big difference you made, and they are validating that it was good, a change for the better.

Rita, a mid-level manager who has been in her position over 10 years, still enjoys being recognized by colleagues. In this example, she was asked her opinion by a younger colleague who had sought her insight on a case study exercise.

Someone came up to me and asked, "Well, what would you do?" At the end of the session she said, "I'm sorry to put you on the spot, I didn't mean to do that . . . but I've seen you in action and I really admire and respect your work." That meant a lot to me.

Besides personal recognition, several of the mid-level administrators indicated feeling motivated when their staffs are recognized as a group. Beth reported that she enjoys receiving emails from other university personnel who comment that her “staff were great.” Similarly, Valeria “gets a kick out of” seeing her staff recognized for their hard work, especially her younger staff who work long hours. Valeria expressed that it is a team effort and that she likes to see the staff recognized as a team.

Pay

Pay was seen by some participants as an inducement to perform in their work. Amy alluded to the fact that monetary rewards are desirable but not an expectation for her working for a state institution. “Monetary [reward] is also always nice, too, but I understand that that’s not in the realm of reality most of the time, especially working for the state.” Tom stated that he enjoys monetary rewards but noted that other rewards are just as meaningful to him. “Reward is not just about financial gain; reward for me is just about being happy—with the job, with the people, the environment you are in.” Similarly, Janice acknowledged that money is somewhat important but not her main motivator:

I remember my husband and I, or my future husband at that time, sitting and talking . . . and we said, “We’re not going into our jobs to make money.” Money has never been that kind of a motivator for me. Does money help? Yes! I’ll be the first one to say “Yes!” If you can’t pay your bills at home, you’re not going to be satisfied in your job. So, I’m not saying that money isn’t a motivator in that sense.

Frank explained that, even when there are monetary rewards, they may not have lasting effects.

We have a merit system. So that if you do well, theoretically, if there is a merit pool available, you may get some additional pay. And that’s nice, for about a month. “Oh, I got a little more pay. Okay, now what?”

A couple of participants indicated that the possibility of working for higher pay and greater benefits induced them to look at positions outside student affairs. However,

the reasons they enjoyed student affairs seemed to outweigh the possibility of making more money, thus mitigating their intention to leave. Rita relayed her consideration of a job outside student affairs.

A relative of mine was very prominent in the field of pharmaceuticals—excellent money, excellent benefits—and really opened the door for me to get on with a major . . . pharmaceutical company. Going through the selection process, I really felt, “This isn’t what I want to do.” I really felt like a salesperson. Although I think medication and medical attention is important, the medical field, it just wasn’t for me. You know, I think education is really best for me. So even though the dollar signs were there, I came back to education.

Frank also expressed thoughts of leaving student affairs based on more pay.

There are days when you [ask], “Why am I doing what I am doing?” and then you talk to people who, using an example in the corporate world, they are doing event planning . . . they are making six digits. So there are those times when you say, “Wow!” You go through the times when the money is a little tight for one particular month where you know you have to do something to the roof of the house, the car breaks down, and you are like, “Why am I doing this, again?”

The Culture of the Institution

Several participants spoke of the culture of the institution as a motivator to perform. These responses clustered around two areas that comprise the culture of the institution: the characteristics of the institution type and the environment established by the leadership in the division of student affairs (Figure 4).

Hispanic Serving

Several participants indicated a greater motivation to perform based on the type of student that the institution serves. As a Hispanic woman working at an HSI, Valeria explained that she felt a responsibility to perform well so that she was a role model for the students whom she served.

I’m at a Hispanic-serving institution. I need to respect that, I need to honor that, I need to show, “Look, I’m a woman, I’m Hispanic, I have a master’s degree. I came from this, and now I’m here and, if I can do that, any of you can do that. You need to not hear what people are telling you, you need to hear what’s going here in your ear.” Letting them know, “You can succeed, you can.” So, I feel like that’s a responsibility that I have, that I need to be able to set this example.

Figure 4
Summary of Participant Interview Data: Culture of the Institution

Hispanic participants felt a responsibility to serve and be a role model for Hispanic students.

Participants enjoyed working at an institution facing rapid growth and establishing programs from the ground up.

Participants expressed the CSAO created a motivating environment by encouraging and supporting professional development.

In her role in admissions, Jessica spoke of the opportunity to work with the family members of Hispanic students who may be apprehensive about letting their child go to school. She uses her experiences as a Hispanic, first-generation college student and the first girl to leave home to identify with family members. Helping family members to see the benefits of letting their child attend college motivates her in her job.

In my culture, girls don't go to school; I was the first girl in my family to leave my parent's house without being married, and that was in 1994! So my goal in working with students is always what are the parents going to say, getting the parental buy in that it's okay, especially for their daughters to [leave home]. That is kind of what drives me sometimes.

From the Ground Up

In addition to the type of student that the institution serves, some participants derived motivation from working at the relatively young institution that was the target site of this study. Many of these professionals were attracted to the institution because of the opportunity to build programs from the ground up and/or contribute materially to the vision of a particular functional area.

Valeria had left her position at a prominent research university with an established housing program because of the opportunity to “be with a housing program from the start up.” She stated that she is motivated by the prospect of using her skills to

build a residence education curriculum and to construct processes that will help her housing staff.

Similar to Valeria, Tom took his current position because of the opportunity to start something new on the campus. In his current position Tom has had the opportunity to shape the union and build a new annex. He reported that the energy and excitement surrounding a new institution motivates him to continue in his position.

I have to say, here at [current institution] one of the reasons I was very attracted to this job was helping establish and being able to build from the ground up. It has been a tremendous journey. You know, when I first got here, I was involved with the construction of the addition, hiring the staff, then bringing in new services. . . . That has kept me fresh.

The Environment Created by Leadership

All of the participants spoke of the important role that the CSAO and her administration had played in creating a motivating environment within the division. By making adroit administrative decisions, including staff in decision making, supporting professional development, and recognizing good work, the leadership had set the tone with staff that they and their work are valued.

In a discussion about feeling rewarded, Tom relayed that the environment in which he works is rewarding, which he attributed to the work of the CSAO. He reported that she has been a good steward of student affairs resources and has created an expectation of communication and collaboration among the departments within the division. He has seen this result in lower turnover in staff and more stability for the division. He explained that this keeps him motivated and working in his current position. “I can seek another job easily, but you have to think about who you are going to work for and . . . having this [current] type of environment is more rewarding.”

Participants viewed the environment established by the CSAO, which embraces and encourages professional development, as motivating in itself. Valeria, an Associate

Director in residence life and education, was motivated by the opportunities to attend professional conferences. She appreciated the culture of professional development that was promoted by the administrators in the Division of Student Affairs:

The Director understands the importance of us being able to get all the knowledge we can to get us to the next stage, as do the Dean and Vice President. Everyone on this campus seems to understand the importance of being able to learn from different institutions and being able to teach other institutions. So whatever is working well for us here, we're encouraged to go to conferences and present it. . . . That's fantastic that we have those opportunities.

Rita explained that the CSAO empowers her assistant vice presidents to do their jobs. In turn, this enables the assistant vice presidents to trust their directors to look strategically at their own departments and decide how to improve them.

My assistant vice president says to me, "I want you to develop your staff, I want you to look strategically at your programs, I want you to become the best department that you can be . . . do things with your staff that are professional development, to encourage them to be on committees that are student affairs led and academic led." That's valued in our division and that's important. That wasn't always the case.

Jessica gave a similar example in which the institution supported her involvement in her professional association. She was honored to accept the position, which motivated her to perform well not only in her elected position but in her position at the institution.

I just was elected by our organization to be a delegate at our national conference. . . . My leadership, without a doubt, just said "yes" because they know that being involved at this level means recognition to our institution and the professional development we are all going to receive [because of the opportunity]. . . . Having that support from my leadership to be more than just at my desk and be more than [target institution] just motivates me.

Summary

The stories of how these mid-level student affairs administrators found their way into student affairs provide valuable insight into their motivations as student affairs professionals. In many cases, the decision to enter the profession occurred during their years as undergraduate students and was influenced by a student affairs professional.

Impacting the lives of the students whom they serve was the primary reason given by participants for entering and remaining in the profession. This was the reason that they gave for enjoying their work, the motivation to perform in their jobs, and the ultimate reward for their efforts.

For many participants, moving into a mid-level administrator position involved supervising professional staff. Most of the administrators shared that impacting their staff members' growth and development was one of the main things they enjoyed about their mid-level positions. The participants saw themselves as role models for their staff, which motivated them to perform well.

Aside from the internal motivation derived from seeing students and staff grow and develop, the participants were motivated by factors that contributed to reinforcement of self. They valued opportunities for professional development, which were seen as both motivators and rewards for performance. All participants enjoyed external recognition of their efforts by students, supervisors, and colleagues. Pay was valued by all participants; while some considered it a welcome reward for their performance, many indicated that it was not a motivator for them to perform.

The participants consistently mentioned institution type and the environment created by division leadership as motivators. For the Hispanic participants in the study, working at the HSI motivated them to perform because of the felt responsibility to be role models to the population whom they served. Other participants were motivated by working at a young, emerging institution where they had the opportunity to build programs from the ground up. Participants were also motivated by the environment created by the CSAO and her leadership team: one where participants felt valued, were encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities, and provided

opportunities for staff to engage in collaborative and cooperative relationships with their colleagues.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Mid-level administrators have been identified as a vital corps of student affairs professionals (Scott, R. A., 1980; Young, 1990). Previously ignored in the literature, mid-level student affairs administrators and the important role that they play in higher education are garnering increased attention. Prior research on this population has focused on the enhancement of skills and competencies (Fey, 1991; Roberts, 2003; Windle, 1998), issues of role conflict (Penn, 1990), satisfaction with work roles (White et al., 1990), intention to leave (Johnsrud & Edwards, 2001; Rosser & Javinar, 2003), and morale (Johnsrud, 1996; Rosser, 2004).

In a time of increased accountability of fiscal and human resources, CSAOs must examine the productivity of individual staff members to determine the efficacy of their division's efforts (Bender, 2009). Although there are many determinants of productivity in an organization, Pinder (2008) suggested that *motivation* is an important determinant over which effective supervisors can often have some impact. With these issues in mind, this study was undertaken to examine what motivates mid-level student affairs administrators to engage in their work. The data were also examined to identify differences in responses among participants based on their professional tenure as mid-level administrators.

Vroom's (1964) theory of work motivation was employed as a theoretical lens through which to view motivation and how it affects performance of work roles. Vroom proposed that belief about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence interact to produce a motivational force that causes a person to perform in ways that will maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Vroom posited that a person will be motivated to expend the

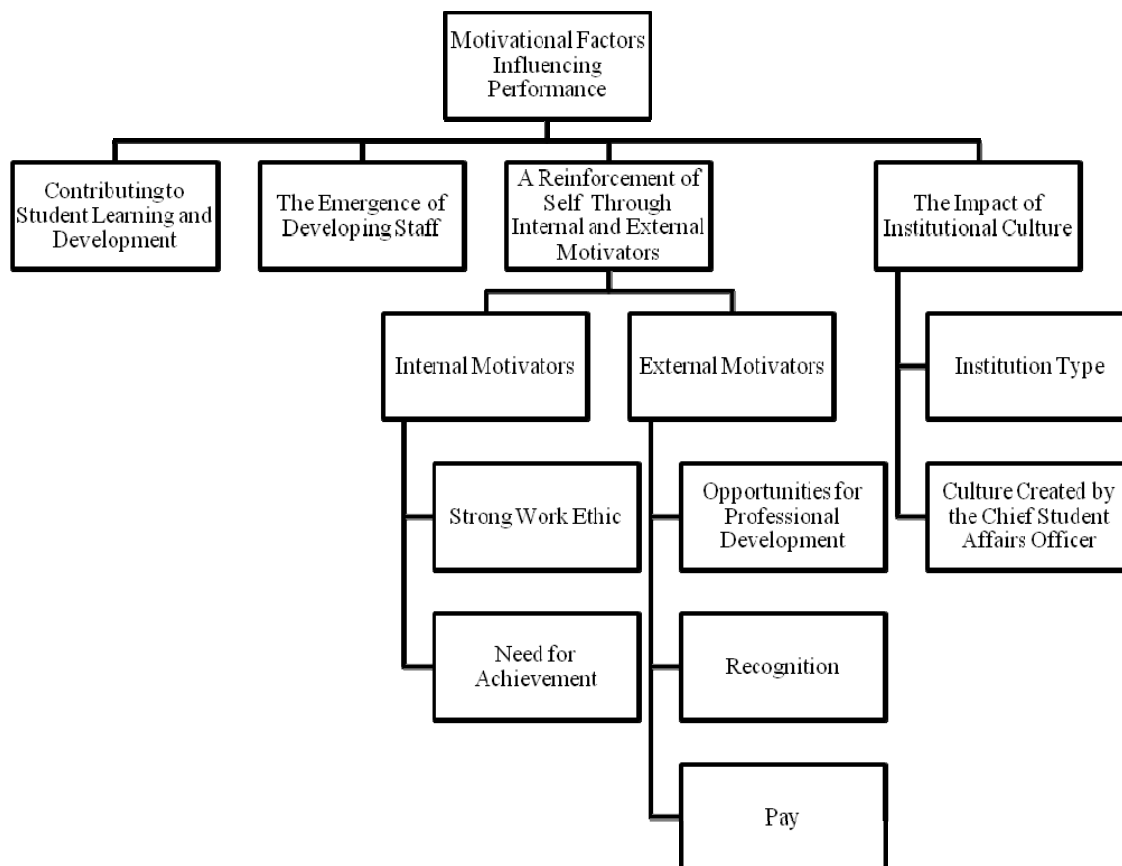
necessary amount of effort to be high performing when the following is true: the person values a particular outcome as positively valent, the person believes that high performance is instrumental in attaining the outcome, and the person's recognition that a certain amount of effort must be expended to attain the high performance (expectancy).

For this study the following research questions were addressed:

1. What motivational factors impact mid-level student affairs administrators' performance in their work roles?
 - 1a. What outcomes do mid-level student affairs administrators perceive influence their motivation levels to perform well?
 - 1b. To what extent do mid-level student affairs administrators perceive that they are rewarded for job performance?
2. Are there differences in motivational factors depending on the career stage of mid-level student affairs administrators?

An examination of five major findings resulted in the emergence of four themes (Figure 5). Theme 1, *contributing to student learning and development as a primary outcome*, underlines the importance of serving students as the primary motivator and reward for performance. Theme 2, *the emergence of developing staff as a valued outcome*, recognizes the new responsibility of supervision as a work role for mid-level positions and the valence attributed to serving and developing staff. Theme 3, *a reinforcement of self*, recognizes the value placed on internal motivators, such as work ethic and responsibility to family, and externally applied motivators, such as opportunities for professional development, recognition, and pay. Theme 4, *the impact of institutional culture*, underscores the importance of the culture of the institution, comprised of institution type and the environment created by leadership. Finally, differences in motivators were not found based on professional tenure as a mid-level

Figure 5
Factors Influencing Motivation to Perform



administrator. This chapter first considers the key findings within each theme while integrating a discussion of Vroom's theory of work motivation, followed by implications of the findings for practice and recommendations for future research.

Discussion and Implications

The object of this study was to identify the motivational factors that mid-level student affairs administrators perceived to impact their performance in their work roles. The identification of valued outcomes and perceptions of received rewards was used to examine this overarching question.

The time spent with these 10 professionals in exploring their work experiences produced rich data that bear implications for student affairs professionals. Overall, the participants in this study enjoyed their work and generally felt rewarded for their efforts in their work roles. Although they mentioned challenges in their positions, such as supervising, managing conflict, and navigating politics, they reported that they felt supported in developing their skills and abilities to meet these challenges. They were eager to speak about what had led them to the student affairs profession and why they chose to remain. They spoke easily about factors that kept them motivated and performing in their mid-level positions.

The findings of this study suggest that mid-level student affairs administrators are motivated by the opportunity to serve students, influence the development of their own staff, internal drives such as work ethic and need for achievement, external factors such as opportunities to engage in their own professional development, recognition and pay, and the culture of the institution in which they work. These factors, individually and collectively, influenced the effort and performance of these mid-level administrators in their work roles.

Each part of this section begins with a general discussion of the theme. Then the way in which various elements of Vroom's theory have relevance to each finding are considered. The research questions were formulated to discover the outcomes that participants perceived as positively *valent* and impacted their motivation to perform in their work roles. Thus, not all parts of the theory are discussed as part of each finding.

Contributing to Student Learning and Development as a Primary Outcome

Typical of the interviewed mid-level student affairs administrators in this study, participant Andrea remarked, "I am just so student focused that they are my main motivator." All of the participants emphasized that the opportunity to serve students was

the primary motivator for their efforts in their work role. Under the umbrella of serving students, many participants were motivated by the opportunity to impact student's lives directly and to see students learn, grow, and develop. Several remarked that serving students was the "purpose of student affairs work." This follows Young's (2001) contention that impacting student learning and development in the context of higher education is a basic tenet of the student affairs philosophy. Student affairs professionals apparently believe in the worth of the individual and hold that "common good can be promoted best by helping each individual to develop to the utmost in accordance with his abilities" (Young, 2001, p. 87). Student affairs administrators believe that their work benefits not only the individual student but also greater society. In her study of job satisfaction, Bender (2009) found that most student affairs professionals enjoyed working with students and believed the job they do is important.

Vroom (1964) examined the motivational implications of the functional properties of work roles. He posited that the mental and physical energy expended by a person in a work role is ultimately aimed at production of goods or services. The key is understanding which job functions particular to a work role represent a source of motivation for performance. Within the functional properties of work roles, Vroom found that work may serve a moral purpose. For some professionals, such as physicians, policeman, ministers, and educators, job functions inherent to their positions provide an opportunity to contribute to the happiness and well-being of their fellow man (Vroom, 1964). For the student affairs professionals in this study, serving students was the primary job function and the outcome to which they assigned the highest valence that impacted their motivation to perform in their work role.

The paths that the participants took to arrive at their current student affairs positions differed but the common motivation for entering and remaining in the field

was the opportunity to have an impact on student growth and development. According to Vroom (1964), “Individuals not only have preferences concerning occupations but also make choices among them” (p. 53). For many of the participants, exposure to student affairs professionals and functions came mainly through their experiences as student workers or graduate assistants in student affairs offices or through involvement in student organizations. The participants spoke of the impact of student affairs staff and programs in their own lives as students and stated that they wanted to have a similar impact on the lives of the students with whom they worked. As they considered student affairs as an occupational choice, the participants were exposed to practicing student affairs professionals. This allowed them to observe the actual instrumentality of the occupation for the attainment of various outcomes, including serving students. Recognition of their own preference for this valued outcome (serving students) had led the participants to select student affairs as an occupational choice.

The goal of influencing students not only drew many of the participants to the profession but it also was the main reason given by participants for remaining in the profession. The possibility of working for other outcomes, such as greater pay, better benefits, and regular hours, had tempted some of the participants to leave their positions for jobs in the private sector. Ultimately, these participants placed a more positive valence on the outcomes that they realized through student affairs work—providing education and service to students—which mitigated their intentions to leave. As Beth stated, “My number one reason [for staying] is seeing students grow.” The experiences and interactions of participants with students were largely influenced by their position and functional area. Participants highlighted specific tasks in which they had an opportunity to interact with or influence students as enjoyable and they reported that they felt a greater inclination to exert effort toward those tasks. In other words, job

content was seen by the participants as instrumental in obtaining the valued outcome of serving students. Vroom (1964) suggested that the content of the job or task to which a worker is assigned has considerable bearing on the strength of his motivation to perform it effectively. The participants in this study held various positions in the student affairs organization and the tasks associated with their positions varied considerably. However, each participant spoke about how specific responsibilities of their positions allowed them the opportunity to serve students.

Those participants in the enrollment management areas (admissions, first-year programs, and financial aid) seemed to derive their motivation from working with students during the college decision-making process or assisting them in understanding how to finance their education. They stated that, although their interactions with students and family members were brief, they felt that their efforts made a major impact on helping the student to matriculate to their university or to another institution of higher education. Seeing the students with whom they worked enroll at the institution was considered by these participants as a reward for their efforts.

The participants who held more traditional student activities positions discussed the opportunity to have meaningful, sustained relationships with students who were involved in student organizations. In efforts to help their students grow and develop, these professionals invested time and effort in one-on-one conversations with students and presented to student groups. Rewards for their effort came in the form of seeing students engage in their activity or grow in leadership positions within their student organization. One participant mentioned feeling rewarded by the acknowledgment from students for his efforts.

For those participants who held positions in more service-oriented areas, such as the student union and recreational sports, motivation was derived not only from the

student who was the recipient of their services but also from the student assistants who worked in their areas. The participants in these areas were committed to providing intentional developmental experiences for their student workers. One participant discussed the extra effort exerted by herself and her staff toward writing a curriculum and facilitating a leadership class for their student supervisors. Similarly, the participant from residence life spoke of the enjoyment and reward of working with student Resident Assistants. She enjoyed being involved in their training and development. Her ultimate reward was seeing the students grow in their positions and receive recognition for their efforts.

The participant who worked in judicial affairs noted that her primary means of impacting students was through one-on-one interactions during student conduct proceedings. She stated that, although it was difficult to see the immediate rewards of her efforts, she knew that she was having a direct impact on students and was grateful when students returned to express gratitude for the role that she had played in their development.

Participants discussed that they were motivated to expend effort toward completing a task that they did not necessarily enjoy if they knew that it would result in service to students. Several of the participants spoke about the stressors inherent to a mid-level position, such as having to support directives from administration, trying to maintain staff morale and program quality during a time of shrinking budgets, and having to work with dissatisfied students, parents, administrators, or other constituents. They reported that the one thing that kept them going was the knowledge that ultimately they were helping students. Frank commented that his motivation to perform arduous tasks came from remembering the primary outcome for that task: to benefit students.

In essence, the participants in this study identified serving students as a primary valued outcome. They agreed that the efforts that they expended in performance of job-related tasks was instrumental in attaining this valued outcome. Having an impact on students and seeing them grow and develop were the reasons the participants had entered the field of student affairs, the reason they chose to remain in their positions, what had sustained them through difficult tasks, and ultimately, what had served as the reward for their efforts.

The Emergence of Developing Staff as a Valued Outcome

“Managing staff is a critical element of the middle manager’s responsibility. Although it is never an easy task, it is frequently the most rewarding” (Mills, 2000, p. 141). Vroom (1964) contended that virtually all work roles require social interaction with other people and that these social interactions may constitute an important factor in the decision to work. Vroom recognized one of the complexities of analyzing the relationship between social motivation and work due to the difficulty of identifying the kinds of social outcomes that motivate people. The participants in this study attributed positive valance to a specific socially derived outcome: the opportunity to help a staff member grow professionally.

As staff members move from entry-level to mid-level positions, a common responsibility that is added to their work responsibilities is the supervision of professional staff (Young, 1990). All of the participants in this study were responsible for supervision, training and evaluation of at least one professional staff member. The participants agreed that concern for the personal and professional well-being of subordinates emerged when they moved into their mid-level role and began to supervise staff. Most participants had had some experience in supervising students and, as mentioned, valued the opportunity to impact students’ learning and development.

However, only when they were given the responsibility of supervising professional staff did they place greater valence on the outcome of developing staff.

Participants expressed that, after the initial apprehension of learning how to supervise, they began to enjoy and feel rewarded by impacting their staff's growth and development. For these participants, this opportunity was a key factor that motivated them to perform in their work roles. Several participants expressed a responsibility to expose their staff to good practice through role modeling. This felt responsibility motivated the participants to perform at a higher level. They stated that they must model proper work behavior in efforts to "walk the walk" and not just "talk the talk." Schmidt and Wolfe (1980) contended that role models "can illustrate how a professional behaves as well as what a professional does" (p. 372). New professionals observe the manner and style that role models use to deal with conflict, interact with colleagues, and balance personal life with professional demands. Supporting the assertions of Schmidt and Wolfe (1980), participants were careful in their responses and reactions to challenges inherent in their mid-level roles, knowing that their subordinates were looking to them for model behavior. Participants spoke of the challenge of having to relay a directive from administrators with which they did not necessarily agree that would produce disappointment in their staff. Knowing that their staff would be looking to their leader's response to the mandate, the participants reported that they exerted extra effort to present the information in a way that supported the directive and, simultaneously, acknowledged the staff's disappointment. Participants were willing to exert efforts toward being a good role model, which they felt was instrumental in achieving a valued outcome: the professional development of staff.

Developing staff was viewed by participants as both a first-level outcome and a second-level outcome (Vroom, 1964). Echoing a statement by Carpenter (2001), the

participants recognized the importance of developing staff to promote and fulfill the goals of the organization, as well as advance staff in their professional development. In this example, participants were motivated to expend efforts toward activities that assisted in developing subordinates (first-level outcome), which contributed to the fulfillment of organizational goals (second-level outcome). Thus, the participants viewed the development of their staff as instrumental in achieving the valued outcome of accomplishment of organizational goals. For example, one participant felt a responsibility to develop staff (first-level outcome) for the betterment of the field of enrollment management (second-level outcome). Participants viewed providing opportunities such as training and role modeling as instrumental in assisting staff with their development.

Supervision of subordinates is one of the key responsibilities inherent in the mid-level administrator role. Although some mid-level administrators struggle with supervision as they learn supervisory skills, many profess that it is one of the reasons they enjoy their mid-level role. They see supervision as a learning experience for all involved (Carpenter, 2001). Seeing their staff members develop and be recognized for their achievements is considered to be a reward for the supervisor as well. Therefore, opportunities to impact a staff member's growth and development are important factors in motivating mid-level administrators to perform in their work roles.

A Reinforcement of Self Through Internal and External Motivators

Vroom (1964) found that workers performed most effectively when performance was a means of attaining goals that were extrinsic to the content of their work. Conversely, Vroom also found that some performance in workers was not tied to an external motivator; instead, internal motivation derived from within the worker. In these situations, performance was not a means to an end but the primary outcome. Therefore,

both internal and external motivators are important determinants of performance.

Participants in this study identified both internal and external motivators that affected their performance in their work roles.

Internal motivators. Intrinsically motivated behavior can be defined as behavior that is performed for its own sake and not for the attainment of externally applied monetary or social rewards (Pinder, 2008). Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that intrinsic motivation is characterized by feelings of interest, accomplishment, and enjoyment. Participants in this study identified two constructs that they felt intrinsically motivated them to perform in their work roles: a strong work ethic and a need for achievement.

Many of the participants mentioned coming from blue-collar, working families who valued a strong work ethic. This trait was passed along to the participants, who reported that it had a significant motivating impact. A person who espouses a high work ethic places great value on hard work, autonomy, fairness, wise and efficient use of time, delay of gratification, and the intrinsic value of work (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002). The participants in this study were highly motivated to perform based on the internal rewards received for performing the activity itself.

In addition to a strong work ethic, several of the participants reported that they drew motivation from a need for achievement. Vroom (1964) suggested that, under certain conditions, effective performance may be its own reward. McClelland (1961) found that some people derived satisfaction from success in competition with some standard of excellence. Some participants reported that their experiences as athletes had cultivated a need for achievement. They cited an internal motivation to excel at any task and reported that they enjoyed tasks that stretched them and challenged them to “do their best.”

External motivators. According to Porter and Lawler (1968), extrinsic motivation is reflected by efforts to attain an externally applied outcome or reward. The participants in this study identified three external motivators impacting their performance in their work roles: opportunities for professional development, recognition, and pay.

Opportunities for professional development. Professional development opportunities are a key way to improve job performance and career potential (Windle, 1998). All of the participants in this study noted the importance of professional development in their professional lives. The opportunity to enhance skills and competencies was perceived as valued outcome and the participants were willing to exert extra effort toward those tasks that led to the outcome. This is consistent with the finding reported by Johnsrud (1996) that mid-level administrators seek to enhance the skills that they possess and to acquire new ones.

Some participants perceived the opportunity to enhance skills and abilities as instrumental in achieving a second-level outcome, such as a promotion or an opportunity for career advancement. Providing opportunities for staff to identify their career aspirations and to develop strategies to progress toward these professional goals is essential (Scott, J. E., 2000). The pyramid-type structure in student affairs limits the number of positions available for advancement to mid-level administrator (Young, 1990). In order for mid-level administrators to advance to senior-level positions, they must continue to add to their repertoire of skills and abilities. For those who seek career advancement beyond the mid-level position, opportunities to engage in professional development may be a key factor in motivating them to perform in their current positions.

Skill development does not always translate to career mobility. Some strive to improve their skills and abilities as a way to enhance performance in their current position (Johnsrud, 1996). Several of the participants indicated little interest in advancing to a senior level position in the organization but still placed positive valance on opportunities to engage in professional development. For these administrators, enhancing their skills and abilities was seen as instrumental in achieving an important second-level outcome: serving students.

The participants provided examples of current professional development opportunities that they found valuable: serving on a division or university committee, attending and presenting at professional conferences, and involvement in professional associations. These opportunities align with those reported by Fey (1991), Windle (1998), and Roberts (2003). Unfortunately, Bryan and Mullendore (1990) found that many mid-managers use a “shotgun approach” to professional development by engaging in opportunities haphazardly, without an intentional plan. Supervisors and division senior leadership can play an important role in assisting mid-level professionals in mapping an intentional professional development plan that will be instrumental in achieving outcomes that the individual administrator values.

Recognition. Mid-level administrators repeatedly express a lack of recognition for their administrative efforts and contributions (Ellis & Moon, 1991; Johnsrud, 1996; Scott, R. A., 1975; Thomas, 1978). However, in agreement with Rosser and Javinar (2003), the participants in this study reported that they were recognized for their efforts and perceived that their work was valued by their student affairs colleagues, campus partners, and institutional leadership.

Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) contended that, to enhance morale and job satisfaction and mitigate intention to leave, mid-level administrators must perceive that

their work is appreciated and valued. All of the participants in this study identified recognition as a valued outcome that motivated them to perform in their work roles.

The participants expressed enjoyment in receiving both formal and informal forms of recognition; preferred methods of receiving recognition varied. Rosser (2004) found that mid-level administrators “want to be recognized and respected for their contribution and expertise within the institution and their work units” (p. 330). Several participants mentioned being nominated by their supervisors for division, university, and professional association awards. Participants who had received awards spoke of the positive impact of knowing that their work was valued. One participant commented that being nominated for an award by her supervisor was welcomed recognition, even when she was not selected as the recipient. Participants also appreciated department-level recognition programs in which staff members could publicly recognize their colleagues for their administrative efforts and contributions.

Although the participants enjoyed formal recognition for their efforts, informal methods of recognition were equally appreciated. All participants spoke positively of the impact of words of praise from their supervisor on their motivation. A couple of participants mentioned receiving and appreciating handwritten notes from their supervisors. In addition to outright symbols of praise, some participants reported that they felt recognized and valued when they were asked for their input or opinion on a matter. In general, mid-level leaders feel recognized when they receive trust, guidance, and constructive feedback from their senior administrators (Rosser, 2004). In addition, involvement with mission and goal development, input in decision making, and involvement in the governance of the organizational unit are perceived by mid-level administrators as recognition of their competence and expertise (Scott, R. A., 1980).

Aligning with Rosser's (2004) findings, the participants in this study placed a high positive value on attention and recognition received from senior-level administrators. However, they also enjoyed recognition by colleagues and students. Several of the more experienced participants welcomed recognition from their colleagues, especially from younger professionals in the field. Although mentoring relationships were not mentioned, several participants relayed experiences in which younger staff had asked for the assistance and expertise of the administrator.

While mentoring can be a time-consuming task, . . . it can also be extremely rewarding. . . . Student affairs professionals at mid-career may have significant wisdom to offer younger colleagues, graduate students, and undergraduates contemplating the student affairs professional journey. (Hughes, 2004, p. 141)

Participants shared that they felt rewarded when their staffs were recognized for their joint accomplishments. These supervisors enjoyed seeing their staffs recognized individually and collectively through formal and informal means. One participant shared that her staff works long hours and that she appreciated when colleagues recognized their hard work. Although they still enjoyed recognition for their own individual accomplishments, all participants agreed that for their unit/department to serve students successfully required a team effort and that the administrator enjoyed seeing the team recognized for their work as a group.

Pay. Although pay was valued as an outcome for performance by several participants and was considered instrumental in being able to live comfortably and provide for families, the impact of pay on motivation to perform was perceived as moderate. Austin (1984a) found that salary was not a significant factor unless employees perceived it to be out of line with the salaries received by peers. Similarly, Grant (2006) found that mid-level administrators wanted to be compensated fairly but that pay was not a major motivator. Realities about the compensation of student affairs practitioners were known by the participants prior to entering the field, which seemed to

influence how they viewed performance as instrumental in achieving that outcome. For example, one participant reported that he could make more money in the private sector for performing tasks similar to those in his current position but that he valued the rewards received in his current position more than the pay he would receive for similar work outside the profession. In essence, although pay is a valued outcome for performance and will contribute to motivation, the participants in this study assigned greater valence and were more motivated to attain outcomes than to receive higher pay.

In a multi-institutional study Hirt (2006) found that student affairs administrators at HSIs placed a higher value on salary and benefits and a lower value on recognition and opportunities for professional development than did professionals at other types of campuses. This comparison was not undertaken in the present study but is noteworthy for future research.

The Impact of Institutional Culture

In this study two elements were used to describe institutional culture: (a) the type of institution and the populations that it served, and (b) the working environment created by the student affairs division leadership. Participants referred to both elements when describing factors that impacted their motivation to perform.

Institution type. Serving Hispanic first-generation students was noted by participants in this study as a motivational factor in performing their work roles. Hirt (2006) found that student affairs practitioners at HSIs reported feeling rewarded when they had the opportunity to see students grow and stated that they were particularly interested in seeing underrepresented and first-generation students succeed.

Although all participants in this study reported that they felt rewarded by their work with students, the participants who self-identified as Hispanic expressed a greater responsibility and reward in working with Hispanic students and their family members.

These participants reported a responsibility to be role models for Hispanic students, which motivated them to perform at higher levels to set good examples. Based on their own collegiate experiences, these Hispanic administrators recalled their own struggles and doubts that had driven them to want to help students who might be experiencing similar situations. Hirt, Strayhorn, Amelink, and Bennett (2006) identified a similar theme of racial uplift and empowerment when studying student affairs professionals at historically Black colleges and universities. A commitment to racial uplift and empowerment is manifested in a desire to “give back” to the race or ethnicity through service to the students, institution, and community.

In addition to being a HSI, the university in this study was fairly young in terms of years after establishment. The institution has experienced significant growth in enrollment, resources, staff, and reputation in the past decade. Coinciding with Hirt’s (2006) findings, many of the participants spoke about how rapidly their institution had evolved. Some participants expressed that they had been drawn to the institution by the opportunity to start programs. Creating new departments, programs, and services can be challenging work that may allow mid-level administrators to be part of strategic planning and decision making. These opportunities allows for greater autonomy in the creation of new programs and services. These work-life issues were seen as factors motivating mid-level administrators to perform (Johnsrud, 1996). Similarly, student affairs administrators at HSIs viewed engaging in meaningful work, a positive work environment, good relationships with others, the ability to influence decisions, and autonomy as the most rewarding aspects of their work (Hirt, 2006). The rapid evolution of the institution in this study provided conditions for participants to attain some of their valued outcomes.

Work environment culture established by the CSAO. The participants in this study expressed that the tone and environment of their division was set by the CSAO and her leadership team. The CSAO plays an instrumental part in shaping the professional environment of the organization. If the CSAO supports a climate that values the work of individuals and supports professional development of staff, opportunities for student affairs professionals are more prevalent. J. E. Scott (2000) contended that professional development opportunities for student affairs staff can contribute to the motivation and effectiveness of the staff and enhance the overall health of a student affairs division. Scott held it essential that institutions and student affairs leaders establish an intentional staff development program to respond to the challenges, demand, and expectations associated with student affairs work.

Differing from findings reported by Hirt (2006), participants in this study placed valence in opportunities for professional development and stated assertively that they worked in a student affairs division that supported these opportunities. The environment created by the CSAO and her leadership team allowed participants to recognize that their performance was instrumental in obtaining the valued outcome: opportunities to engage in professional development. In addition, participants stated that they were empowered not only to participate in their own opportunities for professional development but also to provide similar opportunities for their subordinates.

In addition to establishing a culture of professional development, the CSAO was seen by participants as encouraging and promoting a culture that valued synergy and collegiality. Participants spoke about a “4 C’s” philosophy espoused by the CSAO, “Staff must *communicate* in order to *collaborate* in order to *create* in efforts to *connect*.” This philosophy was embraced by division staff members to serve students, staff, and the institution. This philosophy was seen by the participants as positive and as a motivator

to work with colleagues to serve students. Vroom (1964) noted that the most frequently mentioned sources of employee satisfaction were relationships with co-workers and supervisors. Socially derived satisfactions impact the motivation to work (Vroom, 1964). The opportunities created by the CSAO through the “4 C’s” philosophy allowed participants to obtain outcomes that they valued: interact with colleagues, contribute to their own professional development, and develop programs and services that ultimately benefited students and/or staff learning and development.

Differences in Motivators Based on Professional Tenure Were Not Found

The final question of the study examined the intersection between motivational determinants and professional tenure of the participants. Is there a difference in what motivates participants based on their tenure as a mid-level administrator? Studies have indicated that work-related attitudes and perceptions vary across career stages (Cron et al., 1988; Hall & Nougaim, 1968; Slocum & Cron, 1985). Cron et al. (1988) found differences in the valence attributed to rewards based on career stage. Similarly, Mehta, Anderson and Dubinsky (2000) found that career stage had some impact on the importance that sales managers placed on various rewards. Inconsistent with past findings, the results of this study do not suggest important differences in motivational determinants as a function of career stage. Differences in what motivated the participants to perform were not found based on tenure as a mid-level administrator.

Alternatively, differences were found in relation to the job functions of the participants, specifically the number of staff supervised and the level of interaction with students. Participants who supervised larger numbers of full-time staff more frequently cited “seeing staff grow and develop” as a motivator than did participants who supervised fewer staff members. Participants who had the opportunity to work and interact with students as a regular part of their job function perceived “impacting a

student's development" as a greater motivator. It is not unusual to see job functions shift as professionals advance through mid-level positions. One of the challenges expressed by participants who held director positions was their limited interaction with students. As mentioned in the first finding, the opportunity to serve students was a primary motivator for the participants; thus, those participants whose job functions did not include regular interaction with students created situations to maximize their time with students.

Implications for Practice

Vroom's (1964) theory of work motivation provides to CSAOs insight on how the concepts of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy may influence a staff member's intentions to act in a certain way. Several implications can be derived from Vroom's theory that can assist supervisors who are attempting to motivate staff to perform in their work roles.

The Role of Expectancy

Expectancy is the belief that one's effort will lead to performance (Vroom, 1964). For effort to lead to performance, employees must feel that they have the necessary skills and abilities to exert effort that will lead to good performance. If one feels that, despite one's efforts, positive performance will not be achieved, one is less likely to be motivated to exert any effort. Supervisors may assist in creating positive expectancy forces by aligning a staff member's job content with individual strengths and abilities. In essence, supervisors must assign staff members to jobs for which they are trained and of which they are capable of performing (Pinder, 2008). Most of the participants in this study reported that they felt comfortable in their skills and abilities to complete the job functions associated with their mid-level roles. The two participants

who expressed concern about their abilities were quick to identify opportunities provided by their supervisors and institutional leadership to enhance the related skills.

The Role of Instrumentality

Instrumentality is predicated on the belief that good performance will result in desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Pinder (2008) acknowledged the difficulty facing supervisors who are attempting to reward good performance. Limitations of possible rewards, strict policies regarding pay and benefits, and perceptions of equity can impact a supervisor's ability to reward performance. In addition, practices such as monetary increases and awards that are based solely on seniority instead of performance serve to undermine the connection between good performance and rewards. Supervisors must take measures to ensure that positively valent rewards are associated with good performance (Pinder, 2008). The participants in this study acknowledged that their performance had led to outcomes that they desired. It is of particular interest that all of them expressed enjoyment in receiving recognition from their supervisors for high performance.

The Role of Valence

Vroom (1964) described valence as the affective orientation toward a particular outcome. People attribute value to certain outcomes over others. Therefore, rewards for good performance should be things that an employee desires (Pinder, 2008). People differ in terms of what outcomes they desire. In addition, the valence assigned by a person to a particular outcome may change over time. It is incumbent on supervisors to know and understand what outcomes are desired by employees that motivate them to perform in their work roles. Failure to take critical motivating factors into account can lead to diminished work quality (Mills, 2000). This study examined the outcomes that

mid-level student affairs administrators perceived impacted their motivation to perform in their work roles.

Several outcomes were perceived by the participants as motivating factors: the opportunity to serve students, impacting the growth and development of staff, a reinforcement of self through internal and external motivators, and the culture of the institution. Based on these outcomes, three initiatives that serve to maximize motivation to perform are recommended: (a) maximize opportunities to contribute to learning and development by students and by subordinate staff members, (b) create a culture that supports professional development, and (c) seize opportunities for staff recognition.

Maximize Opportunities to Contribute to Student/Staff Learning and Development

Winston et al. (2001) contended that a primary goal of higher education is student learning and personal development and that student affairs professionals strive to meet these goals through carefully planning and appropriate educational programs and services. Therefore, it is not surprising that members of this student-focused profession identified the opportunity to serve students as the primary motivating factor that impacted performance in their work roles. However, through their stories it was revealed that, as these mid-level administrators assumed more managerial responsibilities, the opportunities to directly impact and see the benefits of student learning and development tended to decrease. Although the participants reported that most of their efforts, even those that were purely administrative, resulted in service to students, many expressed that they were more motivated by opportunities that allowed them to interact personally with students for the students' development. Division and department leadership can play a role in encouraging and supporting opportunities for mid-level administrators, at all levels of the organizational hierarchy, to engage in first-hand experiences that promote student learning and development.

One way for mid-level administrators to remain connected to students and impact their learning is through classroom teaching. As one participant in this study shared, working with colleagues to create and facilitate a leadership class for her student supervisors kept her connected to students. Various opportunities exist at institutions for student affairs staff to serve as instructors in courses such as freshman seminars and student leader training courses for resident assistants or orientation leaders, or to serve as adjunct instructors in higher education programs. The classroom is an ideal environment for mid-level professionals to engage and interact with students. Furthermore, the professionals receive the reward of seeing students grow and develop over the course of a semester.

Another way for mid-level administrators to remain connected to students is through encouraging student participation on department/unit advisory boards. A well-structured advisory board can be a positive resource for department leadership. Several participants mentioned that working with students on advisory boards allowed them to cultivate a more meaningful relationship with those students. Involving students on advisory boards not only increases the opportunities for mid-level administrators to interact with students; it also ensures that students remain an integral part of providing recommendations and shaping services for students.

Providing mid-level administrators opportunities to engage in student programs or processes outside their primary job responsibilities is another way for these staff members to interact with students and directly impact their growth and development. Participants in the study enjoyed opportunities to engage with students through programs coordinated by other departments. Opportunities may include serving as a hearing officer in a student conduct proceeding, volunteering to serve as a student organization advisor, or helping with move-in day at the residence halls. These opportunities not only

allow mid-level administrators to interact with students but also provide chances for them to network with colleagues across the university.

Although opportunities and qualifications required to engage in these types of professional development opportunities vary from institution to institution, division support for involvement in these activities remains critical. If directly impacting student learning and development remains a valued outcome for performance, then division leadership should provide opportunities for staff to be involved first-hand in serving students.

Support Professional Development

Opportunities for professional development were part of three of the findings of this study. First, participants identified opportunities for engagement in their own professional development as a factor that motivated them to perform. Second, participants enjoyed providing professional development experiences for their subordinates. Third, participants found the culture created by the CSAO and her leadership team, which encouraged and supported professional development, to be rewarding and a perceived motivator for performance.

Institutional leaders can play an important part in creating an environment that values and supports continued professional development of staff. Positive development of staff can enhance the overall health and effectiveness of a student affairs division (Scott, J. E., 2000). Participation in professional development activities can assist in the continual acquisition of skills and competencies needed for staff to obtain promotions or to serve students and their institutions effectively (Scott, J. E., 2000). According to Carpenter (2001), student affairs leaders should support professional education of staff through resource allocation, empowerment of staff to seek professional development opportunities, and participation in role modeling of professional development activities.

A culture of professional development set by the division leadership can grow throughout the division. Consequently, mid-level managers are empowered not only to participate in these experiences but also to create opportunities for and support engagement by their subordinates in professional development.

Professional development opportunities serve various needs. They provide social interaction, recognition, and competency and skill development. Professional development opportunities may be recognized as a way of enhancing skills and abilities, which are instrumental for performance in current or future work roles. Roberts (2003) found that mid-level student affairs administrators preferred interactive learning methods, discussions with colleagues and mentors, and attending and presenting at professional conferences as ways to gain competence in skills.

Professional development activities and opportunities can include on-campus programs and opportunities. Participants in this study enjoyed participating in on-campus professional development opportunities such as serving on university committees, participating on the division's staff development team, and, similar to Roberts's (2003) finding, presenting at or attending the division's staff development conference. These types of local opportunities allow staff to recognize the expertise of their colleagues, network with peers, and share their experiences with staff. These types of programs can be supported at minimal cost to the organization.

Mid-level administrators may seek to move beyond the boundaries of their institution for professional growth and development (Segawa & Carroll, 2007). Professional associations and professional conferences provide mid-level administrators an opportunity to interact with and learn from student affairs colleagues from around the state, region, nation, and world. As this study has illustrated, encouraging staff to

present at professional conferences and serve in volunteer leadership roles in professional associations serves as a motivator and a reward for performance.

Formal educational opportunities allow mid-level student affairs administrators to engage in professional development. Several participants in the study reported plans to obtain higher administrative positions within the student affairs profession and recognized the instrumentality of the doctorate for achieving this outcome.

Preference for methods of enhancing skills and competencies varies, so supervisors should understand staff preferences and offer a variety of opportunities that appeal to the desires and needs of staff. Professional development plans should result from joint efforts by employee and supervisor. Division leadership can play an important role in encouraging and supporting mid-level staff to pursue formal education through various methods such as working with staff to understand the institution's human resource policies regarding release and/or flex time, acknowledging class cycles and milestone events related to the program, and recognizing staff who pursue advanced degrees.

Seize Opportunities to Recognize Staff

People must see a connection between good performance and desired rewards. Participants in this study agreed that formal or informal recognition by a supervisor or division leadership was a valued outcome that resulted from their high performance. Leadership must take advantage of opportunities to make mid-level administrators feel valued for their efforts and the efforts of their subordinates.

Formal recognition programs allow for planned, intentional recognition of staff and programs. Nominating staff for university and division awards highlights and rewards good performance, even if the nomination does not result in attainment of the reward. Setting aside time in monthly staff meetings for colleagues to share "kudos" to

other staff can be used to recognize the efforts of staff. Highlighting staff and exemplary programs on websites and in division, institution, and/or professional association newsletters can reward staff for their efforts.

Informal recognition by division leadership can be just as powerful as formal recognition. Several participants in the study reported that an email or handwritten note from a supervisor or a colleague had had a positive impact on their motivation to perform. As one participant confirmed, written or verbal recognition for efforts expended on a particular task can motivate a staff member to increase the effort expended on the task, which can result in increased performance.

Staff need to feel that their work is valued and that their efforts are appreciated. Recognition through formal and informal methods can assist in acknowledging mid-level administrators for their commitment, effort, and performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on outcomes that mid-level administrators perceived as positively valent, that is, that were motivators leading to increased performance. Several areas were identified for future research in motivation among mid-level administrators. First, while sharing their experiences, a few participants referred to “de-motivators”: factors that negatively impacted their performance. Further exploration of de-motivators may assist division leadership and supervisors to identify behaviors, policies, and practices that have a negative effect on staff performance.

A second area for further research relates to the impact of race/ethnicity or gender of the student affairs professional as a motivational factor in serving students with similar demographics. All three Hispanic women in the study spoke of a felt responsibility to model roles and particularly serve Hispanic students at the institution.

Researching how race and gender impact motivation may provide insight regarding ways to provide experiences and rewards for underrepresented mid-level administrators.

This study focused on a sample of mid-level administrators from a large, public HSI because of the complexity of the research topic. Future research could broaden the sample by selecting mid-level administrators employed at a variety of types of institutions. Comparative studies of differing institutional types could reveal differences or similarities in motivational factors that impact performance.

Finally, future research should be conducted to discover identifiable tasks and responsibilities that serve as anchors for particular career stages for student affairs professionals. Unlike tenure track faculty, who progress through traditional ranks (assistant professor, associate professor, etc.) with specific responsibilities within each rank, student affairs professionals do not follow established career paths. In addition, role responsibilities and tasks vary based on elements such as job function, title, and institution type, leading to difficulty in identifying and defining mid-level administrators presented in Chapter 2. Future studies should explore career anchors of student affairs professionals, building on the work of Baldwin et al. (2005) and using faculty development literature as a guide.

Conclusion

The mid-level administrators in this study shared information about their personal lives, work experiences, and professional aspirations. The energy and enthusiasm with which the participants approached their work was remarkable and should serve as an inspiration to other mid-level administrators.

The participants were committed to the students whom they served, the staff with whom they worked, the institution where they performed, and the profession in which they believed. They identified the outcomes that they sought for their performance,

recognized the linkages among effort, performance, and desired outcomes. They reported feeling rewarded for their efforts and readily articulated motivational factors that they perceived to impact their performance.

Mid-level administrators are educators. They are committed to seeing people learn and develop. Students remain the primary purpose of the work of mid-level managers. Even if regular interactions are limited, mid-level administrators will find ways to have meaningful, impactful relationships with students. These administrators also demonstrated a passion for influencing the growth and development of their subordinates and provided opportunities for their staff members to grow. Finally, these mid-level administrators sought validation for their own efforts. Although monetary rewards were appreciated, they were not seen as a primary motivator; instead, opportunities for professional development and recognition of their achievements were cited as important motivators for performance. Due to the important roles that these mid-level student services administrators play in student affairs, it is critical to continue to identify factors that motivate these valuable professionals to perform to the best of their ability.

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APPENDIX A

IRB FORM

**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES - OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**

1186 TAMU, General Services Complex
College Station, TX 77843-1186
750 Agronomy Road, #3500

979.458.1467
FAX 979.862.3176
<http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu>

Human Subjects Protection Program

Institutional Review Board

DATE:	15-Mar-2010
MEMORANDUM	
TO:	HERNANDEZ, CYNTHIA L 77843-3578
FROM:	Office of Research Compliance Institutional Review Board
SUBJECT:	Initial Review
<hr/>	
Protocol Number:	2010-0158
Title:	A Case Study Exploring Motivational Determinants of Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Various Career Stages
Review Category:	Exempt from IRB Review

It has been determined that the referenced protocol application meets the criteria for exemption and no further review is required. However, any amendment or modification to the protocol must be reported to the IRB and reviewed before being implemented to ensure the protocol still meets the criteria for exemption.

This determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:
(<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>)

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Provisions:

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear <Participant Name>,

As a mid-level administrator in the student affairs profession, you represent an important faction of professionals whose work and leadership are essential in furthering the goals and mission of your university. Often regarded as the “firing line” and “linking pin” positions, midlevel managers are critical to the operations of an organization.

Based on a recommendation from a colleague and due to your mid-level position within the Division of Student Affairs at XXXXX, I am inviting you to participate in dissertation research through the Educational Administration Department at Texas A&M University. Findings from this study should provide more specific understanding of the motivational determinants that impact the performance of mid-level student affairs administrators. Your experience and insight will be invaluable to other professionals in student affairs as well as contribute to an area previously underexplored in the literature.

Your participation signifies your consent to be a part of this study; you will incur no repercussion if you choose to withdraw from the study. There are no known risks to you as all information will be coded for confidentiality and accessible only to the primary researcher. In reporting the data, your identity and institution will not be published.

I know that the professional demands placed upon you are great. Therefore, I am asking that you give only 1 to 2 hours of your time for an in-depth, personal, interview scheduled at the most convenient time for you. A 30-minute follow-up phone interview may also be necessary. In order to ensure your responses are preserved for proper analysis, I would like to audio record each interview.

Won't you thoughtfully consider joining me in this venture? I will contact you in two weeks to confirm your participation, answer any questions, and schedule an interview time.

Lastly, I respectfully ask that you forward a vita or resume validating your career path. Any documents can be sent by email to Cynthia.Hernandez@tamu.edu. If you prefer sending your documents by mail, please let me know and I will send you a pre-paid mail envelope.

Sincerely,
Cynthia L. Hernandez
Graduate Student, Texas A&M University, 979-450-8921

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Office of Research Compliance, at (979) 458-1467.

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET

A Case Study Exploring Motivational Determinants of Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Various Career Stages

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study exploring the motivational determinants of mid-level administrators at various career stages. The purpose of this study is to examine and understand the motivation factors that affect performance in mid-level student affairs professionals. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your mid-level position within the university.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 1 to 2 hour interview, a 30 minute follow-up interview (if needed), provide a resume/vita for document analysis, and review your transcript for accuracy. The actions listed above will occur during a six week period.

Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the results of the study are likely to yield generalized knowledge about student affairs mid-level administrators and motivation.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for 5 years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Cynthia Hernandez by phone at 979-450-8921 or by email at Cynthia.Hernandez@tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Participation

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. If you would like to be in the study, please respond, by phone or email, by [date]. I will contact you via email, if I do not hear from you by [date].

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Theory Guiding Question	Interview Question
Expectancy Theory: Valence	<p>Why did you decide to enter student affairs?</p> <p>-Have you ever considered leaving the profession? If so, what kept you in student affairs?</p>
Expectancy Theory: Valence	<p>Talk about your role as a mid-level manager.</p> <p>-What aspects about your position do you enjoy?</p> <p>-What aspects about your position do you not enjoy or find challenging?</p>
Expectancy Theory - Valence	<p>What motivates you to perform in your job?</p> <p>-Of these things that motivate you to perform, are there any in particular that cause you perform at higher levels than others?</p> <p>-What motivates you to perform on those aspects of the job you don't necessarily like?</p>
Expectancy Theory: Expectancy	<p>When you perform well in your job do you believe you are "rewarded" for your effort?</p> <p>-How do these "rewards" impact your motivation?</p>
Expectancy Theory: Instrumentality/Expectancy	<p>Can you give an example of when you have exerted extra effort at work that resulted in a desired outcome?</p>
Career Stage Theory	<p>As you have progressed in your career, do you perceive any change in what motivates you to perform in your job? Explain.</p>

VITA

Name: Cynthia Leticia Hernandez
 Address: Division of Student Affairs, 1256 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843
 Email: Cynthia.Hernandez@tamu.edu
 Education: B.S., Animal Science, Texas A&M University, 1994
 M.S., Educational Administration, Texas A&M, 1996
 Ph.D., Educational Administration, Texas A&M, 2010

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs, Texas A&M University (2006–present)
 Vice President, National Orientation Directors Association: President-Elect (2010)
 Interim Asst. Director, Student Life/New Student Programs, Texas A&M University (2005–2006)
 Coordinator, New Student Programs, Texas A&M University (2001–2005)
 Previews Orientation Coordinator, Northern Arizona University (1998–2001)

HONORS

Association of Former Students' Randy Matson '67 Professional Staff Award (2006)
 National Orientation Directors Ass'n Outstanding Orientation Professional (2004)
 Texas A&M University Graduate Diversity Fellowship (2003) *Offered, not accepted*
 TAMU Division of Student Affairs' Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award (1996)

PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Hernandez, C. L. & Brown, J. J. (2010). Technology in orientation programs. In J. A. Ward-Roof (Ed.), *Designing successful transitions: A guide for orienting students to college*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
 Hernandez, C. L. & Gartner, M. (2009). Special Situation Team: Handling Life's Not-So-Little Problems. NASPA Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
 Hernandez, C. L., & Walker, N. (2003). Beyond Student Leadership: Marketing and Using Your Orientation Leader Skills After College. NODA Region IV Conference, San Antonio, TX.
 Hernandez, C. L., & Singh, S. (2003). Roundtable on Extended Orientation Camps. NODA Region IV Conference, San Antonio, TX.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT

National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) (President-Elect, 2010)

- Vice President for Internal Relations and Membership (2007-2010)
- Region IV Coordinator (Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas) (2002-2007)
- Editor, *The Orientation Review*, NODA's quarterly newsletter (2000-2002)

 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2001-present)
 Association of Student Conduct Administrators (2006-present)